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The measure of independence: From the American Revolution to the market revolution in the mid -Atlantic

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**THE MEASURE OF INDEPENDENCE:
FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION TO THE MARKET REVOLUTION
IN THE MID-ATLANTIC**

A Dissertation

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

In Partial Fulfillment

**Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

by

Richard Smith Chew

2002

APPROVAL SHEET

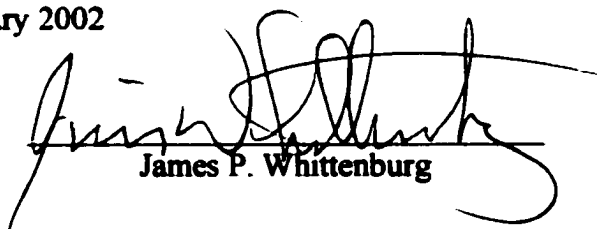
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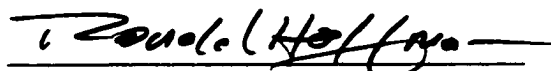


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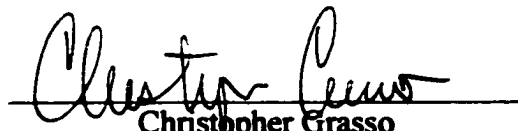
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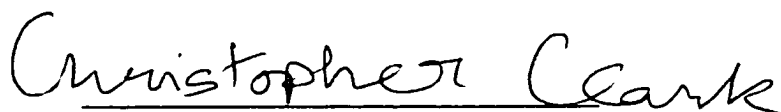
James P. Whittenburg



Ronald Hoffman



Christopher Grasso



Christopher Clark,
University of Warwick

For Ginny

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The image of the lone historian toiling away in the archives, parked behind a microforms reader or struggling to reach an understanding of old manuscripts and documents is the most common image of the historian at work, but this image is best seen as the first in a series, like the opening frame of a movie. To transform the still-life of the historian in the archives into the animated process of historical interpretation requires that other frames follow. The most important are those of friends, colleagues, and the community of scholars contributing their guidance, support, and criticism to the historian's individual crafting of the past. These images help demonstrate why historical interpretation, or the process of constructing meaning, contexts and change over time from the clutter of individual texts, manuscripts, and documents, tends to be a collaborative process. In completing my dissertation, I certainly drew upon a rather extensive community of people for assistance and support. Now that the dissertation is complete, it is only appropriate to acknowledge those people who were important to the process, and to recognize them for the parts that they played.

It is common practice for most authors to wait until the end of their acknowledgements to thank their spouse, but this is a practice that I do not understand. Of all the people who helped me to reach my goals, none contributed more than my wife, Ginny. As a fellow historian and an historical editor, she always encouraged me to seek the best in myself as a person, a researcher, and a writer. Whenever doubts were raised, she quelled them. Whenever I found it difficult to balance the various parts of my

professional life, she helped me discover the right path. She knew when to provide words of criticism and when to provide words of encouragement, often before I knew myself that I needed words at all. She listened to all of my half-baked explanations, partially-formed theses, and speculative arguments that I formulated along the way, and she did it all with a grace, a kindness, and an intelligence that I will never forget.

After Ginny, the person who is most responsible for helping me reach this plateau is Jim Whittenburg—no graduate student could have ever hoped for a better dissertation director. It could have been very easy to feel like the ugly duckling in Jim's flock. Over the last twenty years, Jim has built a cottage industry at the College of William and Mary and beyond on the history of the American backcountry. Thus my dissertation, which focuses primarily on a port town and embraces the genre of Atlantic history as much as it looks to the west, may appear quite out of place beside the work of Jim's other students. Yet Jim never treated me as an interloper. Quite the contrary, he encouraged me in every possible way, reminding me to stay focused and to be true to the topic and the evidence so that my own interpretation could unfold. His help extended far beyond my dissertation into my professional life as a teacher, and I have come to think of him as not just a director, but as a mentor and a trusted friend.

My community of support also included many other faculty and graduate students at the College of William and Mary. A few years back at a gathering at the college, Jim Merrell, a professor visiting from Vassar College, commented to me and Lynn Nelson, a fellow graduate student at the time, that William and Mary had the happiest graduate students he had ever met. It struck Merrell as a peculiar, even unnatural phenomenon, and he was curious as to the cause. Lynn and I agreed that our happy situation was

partially due to the example set by the faculty in fostering a community of learning and intellectual exchange, and was partially due to the large number of students all working on topics in early American history. I was continuously amazed and delighted at how easy it was to learn from my fellow graduate students and develop my own ideas further from casual conversations with friends. For their inspiration, companionship, and encouragement I would especially like to thank Mike Jarvis, Mary Carroll Johansen, Laura Kamoie, Catherine Kerrison, Lynn Nelson, David Preston, Dave Rawson, Julie Richter, Judy Ridner, Andy Schocket, Bob Smith, Gail Terry, and Kyle Zelner.

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Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary, particularly those in the inter-library loan office, the staff of Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania, Bertrand Library at Bucknell University, the Maryland Historical Society, the Hall of Records in Annapolis, the Baltimore City Archives, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania State Archives, and the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society. I especially appreciate the help extended to me by archivists in the various county historical societies in Pennsylvania and Maryland, including the Lancaster County Historical Society, the Dauphin County Historical Society, the Historical Society of York County, the Huntington County Historical Society, the Bedford County Historical Society, the Adams County Historical Society, the Cumberland County Historical Society, the Harford County Historical Society, and the Cecil County Historical Society.

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Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues at Bucknell University, especially Leslie Patrick and Richard Waller, for helping make my first full-time teaching position as an assistant professor an easy one. I spent a considerable portion of the fall semester juggling classes with finishing my dissertation, and they insured that every accommodation was made so that I could finish the manuscript before the AHA meeting in San Francisco in January 2002.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the social and economic changes in the mid-Atlantic region generally, and Baltimore City and its hinterlands specifically, between the late colonial period and the dawn of the Jacksonian era. Founded in 1729 by legislative act, Baltimore foundered as a colonial entrepot until wheat emerged as an important export commodity in the 1740s. Between the mid-1740s and the American Revolution, the town grew steadily within the parameters of the British mercantilist world. Its trade was deeply dependent on Atlantic commerce, its social structure reflected the mercantile orientation of the town and the staunchly deferential colonial household economy. The Revolution threatened to overturn this world with the promise of free trade and the possibility that the new republic could remake the Atlantic world. This promise flickered out with the return of European mercantilist restrictions and hard times. Thereafter, merchants abandoned their revolutionary ambitions, and sought to re-establish old commercial ties within the British Empire. Artisans sought to strengthen the ties that bound together workers to workshops in the colonial period, and preserve the deferential social order. Thus instead of making a clean break from the colonial to the early national after the Revolution, Baltimore and the mid-Atlantic entered a postcolonial period in which merchants and artisans forged a *neomercantilist mentalité* to perpetuate much of the traditional social and economic order of colonial America.

The postcolonial period continued until the Bank of England suspended specie payments in 1797. This triggered a financial panic in the Atlantic world, and caused the return of hard times to Baltimore and the mid-Atlantic. Economic misfortune encouraged a reorientation of the town's social and economic life away from the Atlantic world and towards the backcountry and the frontier beyond. America thus moved from the postcolonial to the early national. After 1800, merchants and artisans sought to establish market ties to the backcountry by investing in manufactories, turnpike companies, banks, and western newspapers. These trends were accelerated by the Embargo of 1807, and by 1812, a nascent manufacturing class had emerged. This transformation came at a price. Without technological improvements to augment productivity, manufacturers achieved economies of scale by squeezing more labor from their workers, thus destroying the deferential bonds that held together the household economy and the colonial social order. The urban transition from workshop to manufactory was therefore chaotic, and eventually led to the Baltimore riots of 1812, the largest and most violent the country had ever witnessed.

**RICHARD SMITH CHEW
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY**

THE MEASURE OF INDEPENDENCE

-

INTRODUCTION

THE MEASURE OF INDEPENDENCE

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Americans experienced two revolutions. The first occurred on July 4, 1776 when the united colonies declared their independence from the British Parliament and King George III. The second, which occurred sometime thereafter, transformed America from an Atlantic-oriented, export-led society deeply dependent on the Atlantic world, into a westward-oriented, production-led society seeking to establish a unique national culture. These two revolutions, the American Revolution and the Market Revolution, have provided the organizing paradigms over the last few decades for historians studying the Revolutionary era and the early American republic. Unfortunately, these paradigms have not always proved complementary. Thanks in part to the hierarchies of knowledge within the historical profession, which often provide an arbitrary demarcation between those who study Colonial and Revolutionary America and those who study Jacksonian and Antebellum America, a sharp interpretive division has emerged between the prevailing paradigms of America's two revolutions.¹

¹ On the idea of hierarchies of knowledge, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1971). The idea of the switch from an export-led to a production-led economy is not new. At a conference sponsored by the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation in 1966, Gordon Bjork proposed the idea that the United States in 1790 remained as dependent on foreign trade as the colonies had been prior to 1776. He continued that between 1790 and 1825, with the fulcrum likely centered between 1795 and 1810, Americans rejected their dependence on the Atlantic economy and embraced the idea of developing a more independent national economy. Bjork did not offer any reasons why this turn-of-events came about, he was unable to narrow the chronological framework for the transition, his

Students of American history do not have to search long to discover the scholarly divide. In his synthesis of the American Revolutionary era, Gordon Wood asserted that the American Revolution "released powerful popular entrepreneurial and commercial energies that . . . transformed the economic landscape of the country." By the end of the eighteenth century, these forces "created a society fundamentally different" from that of Colonial British America. Thus, according to Wood, the Market Revolution developed as a direct result of the American Revolution, and the subsequent emergence of a new democratic and capitalist social order was largely complete by the time Thomas Jefferson delivered his first inaugural address in 1801. Wood's revolutionary portrait of American society in the late eighteenth century does not square, however, with Charles Sellers's synthesis of the Jacksonian era. According to Sellers, political independence "loosed republicanism on the modern world," but "a majority of free Americans [still] lived in a distinctive subsistence culture" as late as the War of 1812. Unlike Wood's claim that America experienced an explosion of entrepreneurial zeal, Sellers believes that the colonial emphasis on "family obligation, communal cooperation, and reproduction over generations of a modest comfort" continued to guide social and economic relationships well into the nineteenth century. It was only after 1815 that Americans began to surmount "deeply rooted patterns of behavior and belief" left over from the Colonial era. Instead of the break with Great Britain causing the social and economic transformation of American society, it was the much later changes in the nineteenth-century that, according to Sellers, dissolved the traditional social order in favor of a "capitalist hegemony over

statistical findings were not broadly accepted by the conference participants, and he did not pursue the approach any further. See David Gilchrist, ed., *The Growth of the Seaport Cities, 1790-1825: Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation, March 17-19, 1966* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 54-82.

economy, politics, and culture," and "created ourselves and most of the world we know."²

The interpretive divide between the scholarship on the American Revolution and that of the Market Revolution has produced intellectual confusion in the historiography, making it difficult to gauge the economic and social consequences of American political independence, and nearly impossible to determine the origins, or even reach a consensus over the definition of the Market Revolution. Some historians have begun to express concern that the intellectual divide is beginning to distort our understanding of eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century America, and threatens to leave the mental landscapes of each period badly tarnished.³

It is the aim of this study to bridge the scholarly divide by taking the measure of social and economic change after the American Revolution, and, by doing so, to illuminate the origins of the Market Revolution. Before this bridge can be built, however, it is important to fully appreciate the nature of the chasm to be spanned. Despite the numerous cries of alarm, Wood's and Sellers's interpretations have proven extraordinarily resistant to revision despite the best efforts of social and economic historians to revise the prevailing paradigms. Recent scholarship demonstrates that the eighteenth-century American economy was deeply commercial at nearly every level, thus

² Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 6, 8, and Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3, 5.

³ Alfred Young concluded that current scholarship does not suggest "a single paradigm" to answer the question of how revolutionary was the American Revolution, and Richard Bushman has expressed concern that the intellectual divide is distorting our understanding of early American agriculture. See Alfred Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 318, and Richard Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 55 (1998): 351-74.

Sellers's claim that a "subsistence culture" prevailed in America until 1815 can no longer be accepted.⁴ Yet on the first page of a recent collection of essays on the Market Revolution, Melvyn Stokes repeated Sellers's argument, declaring that "a largely subsistence economy of small farms and tiny workshops, satisfying mostly local needs through barter and exchange" was replaced by "an economy in which farmers and manufacturers produced food and goods for the cash rewards of an often distant marketplace."⁵ Wood's claim that the break with Great Britain unleashed commercial energies that transformed society within a few decades is also in need of revision. Recent scholarship on rural America has demonstrated that many farmers maintained traditional patterns of local exchange well into the nineteenth century, resisting much of the entrepreneurial zeal that Wood claims was overwhelming American society.⁶ Yet in her recent study of post-Revolutionary America, Joyce Appleby reaffirmed Wood's

⁴ See especially Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 41 (1984): 333-64; Edward Perkins, "The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Colonial America: The Foundations of Modern Business History," *Business History Review*, 43 (1989): 160-86; Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Winifred Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Joyce Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Tim Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 50 (1993): 471-501.

⁵ Melvyn Stokes, "Introduction," in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 1.

⁶ See especially Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeomen Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and*

interpretation, arguing that in the wake of the separation from Great Britain, the bedrock of American capitalism emerged; independence allowed the Revolutionaries to cement "personal ambition to an imagined national enterprise that vindicated democracy."⁷ Never has there been a more complete fusion of the American Revolution and the Market Revolution as a single phenomena.

The prevailing paradigms thus plod along, and are now part of the narrative of college-level textbooks. In *Making a Nation: The United States and Its People*, students learn that in the wake of the American Revolution, "enterprising Americans with a little capital to invest could rise quickly," and "all along the western frontier, farmers rushed in to take up new lands," reversing "the trend that was taking place before the Revolution, when the growing population had sought employment in the cities." Thus it appears at first glance that the authors have embraced Wood's interpretation. Yet in a later chapter, students learn that it was only after 1815 that "American settlement in the trans-Appalachian territories swelled." The narrative thereafter adopts Sellers's interpretation, presenting the case that in the years following the War of 1812, entrepreneurs and farmers built "the foundation . . . for America's market revolution."⁸

The hierarchy of knowledge that frequently separate historians of the eighteenth century from those of the nineteenth century helps explain why the scholarly divide emerged in the first place, but it does not clarify why the prevailing paradigms have

Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms."

⁷ Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 56.

⁸ Jeanne Boydston, Nick Cullather, Jan Ellen Lewis, Michael McGerr, and James Oakes, *Making a Nation: The United States and Its People, Combined Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 203-04, 280.

proven so resistant to revision. To explain the latter, the focus should be placed on how the word *revolution* is commonly used in each interpretation. For most Americans, *revolution* suggests a violent and immediate change, or a clean break from one form of political or social organization to another—something akin to a light switch being flipped in a dark room. This use of the word requires a "before" and an "after," and leaves almost no room for an intermediary period. It is this meaning of the word revolution that is commonly used in both Wood's and Sellers's studies. In both interpretations, American society moves directly from the colonial to the national, skipping over the post-colonial period that is common in studies of nearly every other post-revolutionary society around the world—there is no room for the uncertainties of a postcolonial period.⁹ Although they disagree on the precise timing, both Wood and Sellers argue that American society made a clean break from the colonial to the national, and assign a narrow window of time for when the moment of transformation occurred. For Wood, the break occurs with the separation from Great Britain. Although he allows for the idea that it took years for the Revolution to "run its course," the Revolution was nonetheless "integral to the changes occurring in American society, politics, and culture at the end of the eighteenth century." In short, the course was set in Philadelphia by the Continental Congress and thereafter did not waver. For Sellers, the transition is even tighter, being ushered in by the Fourteenth Congress in 1815. Led by John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay, the "new-style Republicans" pushed "national developmentalism far beyond anything envisioned by the

⁹ Indeed, the idea of an immediate, sweeping revolution is so deeply ingrained in American scholarship that postcolonial theory, normally the dominant historical methodology in studies of post-revolutionary cultures, has made almost no impact on the American historical imagination. A notable exception is Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

parochial Federalism of port elites," and "sought to turn the republic irrevocably toward its capitalist destiny."¹⁰

It should be noted here that for studies of the American Revolution that focus on politics and ideology, the idea of an immediate and sweeping revolution works well enough because the break with Great Britain did produce immediate and sweeping consequences. State legislatures ratified new constitutions, local patriot leaders confiscated property of those who remained loyal to the crown, and requisitions were made in every community for troops and supplies to fight the invading British. In the years immediately following the war, the democratic aspirations of the people swirled into a popular politics that called for social equality, greater economic opportunity, and an expansion of the franchise. Although African Americans, women, and Indians did not fully share the gains made in these early struggles for democratization, the Revolution did make a difference for these groups. The African American community was politically galvanized by the Revolution, and slavery became a morally ambiguous and politically volatile issue for the first time. Women were also energized politically by the Revolution, and gender emerged as a central concern in republican thinking. And from the Seneca in the north to the Cherokee in the south, Indians recovered from the devastation of war through a religious and cultural renaissance that helped redefine Indian identity itself.¹¹ For studies of social and economic change after the American

¹⁰ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 7, and Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 69.

¹¹ The literature on these various subjects is vast, but see especially Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in an Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Patricia Bradley, *Slavery*,

Revolution, however, the idea of a sweeping revolution simply does not work. As the scholarship on the commercial nature of the colonial economy and the scholarship on the persistence of local exchange in nineteenth-century rural America demonstrates, there was never a clean break between a colonial, subsistence society and a national, commercial one. To insist upon a clean break, either in 1776 or 1815 or at any other time, creates a metahistory at odds with the historical record.

To gain a better understanding of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century America, we must alter how we use the term *revolution* in regard to social and economic change. In his multi-volume work on the history of capitalism and civilization, Fernand Braudel provided a useful way to think about the idea of *revolution*. He observed that "rapid and slow change are inseparable" in social and economic revolutions, "For no society exists which is not torn between the forces working to preserve it and the subversive forces—whether perceived or not—working to undermine it." For this reason, the term "*revolution* in the sense of upheaval or overthrow of an existing society" is not a useful concept in the study of economic and social change unless the idea of revolution also encompasses "the opposite sense meaning *reconstruction*."¹² It is important to consider that the idea of *reconstruction* is not a question of slow versus rapid change towards a certain goal; Braudel rejects the idea of a steady progression. Instead,

Propaganda, and the American Revolution (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1980); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969); and Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹² Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, vol. III, *Civilization and Capitalism*. trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 537-538.

reconstruction recognizes that those who experience social and economic dislocation will likely try to preserve a portion of the past while, at the same time, advocate revolutionary change on a range of other matters. A period of social and economic *reconstruction* will therefore appear rather messy, as economic change may not always keep pace with social change, or the other way around. It is this theory of *revolution*, one based on the importance of the idea of *reconstruction*, that we can begin to build a bridge between the American Revolution and the Market Revolution. The approach provides a useful framework to explore America's post-revolutionary transformation by opening up the possibility for a post-colonial period in which the American economy and American society was no longer colonial but not yet national. The approach will take the measure of independence by shedding light on how an Atlantic-oriented, export-led society deeply dependent on the Atlantic world came to be a westward-oriented, production-led society striving to create a unique national identity.

THE CONTOURS OF CHANGE IN REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA

Americans are used to thinking about their country as a continent-spanning superpower, and of themselves as an independent, democratic people. The country's origins were much different. Prior to the Declaration of Independence, America consisted of a string of underdeveloped colonies straddling the edge of North America on the outer reaches of the British Atlantic world. Far from being independent-minded, most white Americans imagined themselves as part of a Greater Britain. The vast majority of the population lived within fifty miles of the coast, their governments were subservient to the British Parliament, their economies were thoroughly dependent on

British trade and credit, and most social relationships in colonial America were shadowy recreations of standards set by a steeply aristocratic British society. The American Revolution promised to change all of this. Monarchical government would be shattered, Britain's mercantilist dominance would be ended, and a new republican society would emerge steeped in public virtue. The successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War accomplished the first of these goals, but it would take decades before the country's social and economic relationships would shuffle off the coil of their colonial origins.¹³

Although a nascent manufacturing class emerged in the 1780s that hoped to break the country's dependence on foreign trade, the patterns of Atlantic commerce established in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries still guided the American economy at the end of the eighteenth century. The continuation of the mercantilist system insured that much of the colonial social order survived into the early republic.

The persistence of traditional society in the wake of the Revolution was quite apparent to François Auguste René de Chateaubriand. When the young French aristocrat arrived in the new republic in the 1790s, he was surprised to discover little evidence that a revolution had taken place in America. He recalled that as "a man landing as I did in the United States, full of enthusiasm for the ancients, a Cato seeking everywhere for the rigidity of the early Roman manners," he was shocked to discover that "the United States gives rather the idea of a colony than a nation; there one finds customs, not mores." He continued that "at Philadelphia, I could have thought myself in an English town: nothing

¹³ A recent interpretation of early American politics suggests that Colonial British political culture persisted beyond the Revolution too. See Elijah Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

proclaimed that I had passed from a monarchy to a republic."¹⁴ After he had spent more time in the United States and conversed with the people, Chateaubriand discerned distinct differences between American and European political sensibilities. Yet his first impressions of America proclaimed a traditional society not unlike the Europe he had recently departed.

Chateaubriand perceived America through the eyes of an aristocratic European, but many Americans noticed the same patterns of change, or lack of it, in post-Revolutionary society. In his classic tale, "Rip Van Winkle," Washington Irving provides an ambiguous portrait of how far American society was transformed by the Revolution. When Rip Van Winkle awoke from his long sleep, he could scarcely believe his eyes. He remembered that he and his dog had ventured into the mountains above his village the evening before and met a stocky fellow with a grizzled beard dressed in a quaint Dutch fashion. He had followed the curious man farther into the mountains, arriving at what was presumably the fellow's home. There he gladly accepted the man's hospitality, and after drinking a liberal quantity of spirits, fell asleep outside on the side of the mountain. That much was clear—little else made sense. Upon waking, Rip expected to find his fowling piece lying next to him, but he discovered instead an old, rusted and worm-eaten musket. He called to his dog, but his calls echoed in vain through the mountains. Even his personal appearance was dramatically altered as his beard now reached down almost to his waist. Yet the biggest surprise awaited him in the valley below. After descending the mountain and returning to his village, a troop of people surrounded him, demanding to know if he had voted for the Federalist or for the Democrat in the day's election. Old Rip had no

¹⁴ François Auguste René de Chateaubriand, *Chateaubriand's Travels in America*, trans. Richard Switzer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 15.

idea what they were talking about, and decided to declare himself "a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King—God bless him!" This seemingly prudent statement did not have the desired effect as the crowd became increasingly agitated. The authorities soon arrived and realized that the newcomer was really Old Rip Van Winkle who disappeared twenty years before when he ventured into the mountains. For Rip Van Winkle, those two decades had passed in a single night; his old life was gone, and the world around him now was radically different than the one he knew.¹⁵

In Irving's story, the commotion and controversy over the election clearly marked how much the political landscape had changed. For the townspeople, discovering the newcomer's political allegiance preceded all other questions, including finding out his name and where he came from. For Rip Van Winkle himself, the country's political transformation was so far-reaching that its contours were perplexing. "It took some time" before Rip could grasp the idea that "instead of being a subject of his majesty King George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States." The difficulty Rip faced in comprehending the new political order helps demonstrate that for Irving, the Revolution was indeed revolutionary in a political context. Yet Irving's story also suggests that the pace of social and economic change did not keep up with the changes to the political landscape. When Rip entered the town, he stared in amazement at "the rows of houses which he had never seen before." The changes were startling, and "he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched." Yet the enchantment did not last very long. Unlike the bewildering political changes he encountered, however, the social and economic changes were just unsettling. The

¹⁵ Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle," in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* [1819], intro. William Hedges (New York: Penguin, 1988), 28-42.

transformation was not so far-reaching that he mistook the place for anything other than his old village. The place was "larger and more populous," and there were "strange names . . . over the doors—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange." Yet Rip recognized enough of the old in the new to locate his house and the inn where he spent many evenings smoking his pipe. Once his identity was known, he had little trouble settling into his daughter's "snug well furnished house," and resuming "his old walks and habits."¹⁶ For a man trying to make sense of his surroundings by comparing them to the society he had known in late colonial America, adjusting to the social relationships in the new republic proved far easier than adjusting to the new political sensibilities.

The fictional account of Rip Van Winkle's experiences and the personal observations of François de Chateaubriand present a microcosm of post-Revolutionary change in America. The break with Great Britain in 1776 symbolically cut off the head of King George III, an act that proved as revolutionary as the executions of England's King Charles I in 1649, France's King Louis XVI in 1792, or Russia's Tsar Nicholas II in 1917. The new United States was a bold experiment in republican government over a fifteen-hundred-mile-long area—nothing like it had ever existed in the history of the world with the possible exception of the ancient Roman republic. The new political order demanded a revolutionary change in political relationships, transforming subjects into citizens and British colonials into American nationals. There was an outpouring of democratic sentiment that continued long after the Revolution, and the weight of these changes is clearly felt in Irving's story. Yet the rhythms and patterns of everyday life had

¹⁶ Irving, "Rip Van Winkle," 36, 40.

not changed by nearly the same degree. In Irving's vision of the 1790s, the social and economic changes to American society that immediately followed the Revolution were significant—what one might expect after a lapse of twenty years—but the changes were far from revolutionary. For Chateaubriand, it was unclear whether or not Americans had changed any of their colonial habits and traits.

The persistence of traditional society in the decades after the Revolution is in many ways remarkable, because, as historian Carl Becker argued, "the American Revolution was the result of two general movements; the contest for home-rule and independence, and the democratization of American politics and society." The former was clearly a "question of home-rule; the second was the question . . . of who should rule at home."¹⁷ Countless studies have supported Becker's dual-revolution thesis, demonstrating how artisans, journeymen, apprentices, African Americans, Indians, women, and many others hoped and expected that the Revolution would transform the social structure of colonial America in addition to removing the authority of the King and Parliament. Studies of post-Revolutionary America have likewise demonstrated that the American people remained politicized long after the war and continued the struggle for political democratization. As historian Merrill Jensen argued, "the Revolution was essentially, though relatively, a democratic movement," and "its significance for the political and constitutional history of the United States lay in its tendency to elevate the political and

¹⁷ Carl Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909), 5, 22.

economic status of the majority of the people."¹⁸ Despite the Revolution's "natural" tendency, however, social hierarchies of race, class, and gender articulated during the colonial period still informed the ways in which people were subordinated to each other, and in many cases these traditional social connections were strengthened during the late eighteenth century. Americans also continued to fix their commercial gaze across the ocean to markets in Europe and beyond. Their mercantilist leanings kept them as reliant on foreign trade as they had been before the Revolution. Although a few pioneers began venturing west of the Appalachians, most Americans continued to cling to the Atlantic coast; as late as 1795, the port city of Baltimore was the population center of the United States!¹⁹ Although the colonies had severed their political ties to the British government, American society remained intimately connected to and dependent on the Atlantic economy.

Historians who have sought to understand the continuing rigidity of the nation's social and economic structure in the 1780s and 1790s have searched for the presence of powerful counter-revolutionary forces strong enough to have withstood the Revolution's

¹⁸ Merrill Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation: An Interpretation of the Social-Constitutional History of the American Revolution, 1774-1781* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 10.

¹⁹ The population center is "the center of population gravity, or that point upon which the U.S. would balance if it were a rigid plane without weight and the population distributed thereon, with each individual assumed to have equal weight and to exert an influence on a central point proportional to his or her distance from that point." According to the Bureau of the Census, the population center of the United States in 1790 was 39° 16' 30" North by 76° 11' 12" West, or approximately 23 miles east of Baltimore City. In 1800, the center had moved almost due west to 39° 16' 6" North by 76° 56' 30" West, or approximately 18 west of Baltimore City. Thus in 1795, the population center would have likely been between these two points in the vicinity of Baltimore City itself. After 1800, the population center moved westward at a rate of approximately one degree of longitude per decade until the end of the nineteenth century. See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2000* (Mahwah, NJ: Primedia Reference, 1999), 385.

"natural" democratizing tendencies.²⁰ The most popular explanation centers on the centralization of power in the hands of the few that is supposed to have resulted from the ratification of the Constitution, the rise of the Federalist Party, and the implementation of Alexander Hamilton's financial program.²¹ In modern America, where the state has become a powerful engine for directing social and economic development, this argument may be convincing. It is easy to forget that during the 1790s, the government lacked the power it now possesses over American life, and that Hamilton himself, who plays a central role in most of the anti-democratizing theses, tried in vain during the 1790s to end American dependence on overseas trade and cultivate a domestic manufacturing class. There were others who also wished to break the nation's dependence on foreign trade, and

²⁰ Many historians of the American Revolution have rejected the idea that there was any rigidity to the American economy or social structure, and have interpreted the immediate post-war period as succumbing to what historian J. Franklin Jameson called the "transforming hand of the revolution." See J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967; orig. 1926), and Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. For an excellent review essay of the so-called "Jameson thesis" in the American historical imagination, see Alfred Young, "American Historians Confront the 'Transforming Hand of Revolution,'" in Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert, eds., *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 346-94.

²¹ The counter-revolution thesis cuts across traditional ideological interpretations of the Revolution, and encompasses so-called Progressive, Classical Republican (Neo-Whig), Lockean-Liberal, and New Left views. For an example of the Progressive approach, see Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation*. For a Classical Republican (Neo-Whig) approach, see Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). For a Lockean-Liberal approach, see Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984). For a New Left approach, see Michael Merrill and Sean Wilentz, eds., *The Key of Liberty: The Life and Democratic Writings of William Manning, "A Laborer," 1747-1814* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Also see Richard Rosenfeld, *American Aurora, a Democratic-Republican Returns: The Suppressed History of Our Nation's Beginnings and the Heroic Newspaper that Tried to Report It* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Larry Tise, *The American Counterrevolution: A Retreat from Liberty, 1783-1800* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998); and the essays in Alfred Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution*, and Robert Gross, ed., *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

convince their fellow countrymen to re-imagine the West in terms of market development instead of landed speculation. In the following decade, Albert Gallatin, President Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, adopted much of the Hamiltonian program as his own—which seems to abrogate any villainy on Hamilton's part—and Gallatin also tried, once again in vain, to win Congressional support for building transportation links across the republic. The frustration of both Federalist and Republican officials to shape the national economic agenda, at least prior to Madison's radical solution in the Embargo of 1807, makes the counter-revolution, or centralization-of-power thesis difficult to accept.

Instead of a top-down approach stressing the primacy of elite political figures, it seems that a bottom-up approach stressing the primacy of social and economic institutions would provide a more convincing portrait of the forces that propped up traditional society after the Revolution. Indeed, as Michael Warner has argued, "the structuring of the transatlantic economy as a colonial economy had deep consequences for almost every aspect of Anglo-American culture," and thus "the market culture of the [British] Atlantic may have been more responsible than anything else for the practical sense of belonging to an imperium." In this context, a colonial culture could persist after the Revolution because it could be "experienced in many indirect ways."²² Thus to the extent that Americans relied on a mercantilist understanding of political economy and looked to the British Atlantic world in search of their future wealth and prosperity, much of what made pre-Revolutionary America colonial had thus passed into the early republic unscathed. The institutional structure of the Atlantic economy supported the household

economy, and the household economy reinforced a social structure common to both Colonial and postcolonial America.

When Americans ceased to rely on a mercantilist understanding of political economy and looked to the West to develop a domestic market economy, the structures upholding traditional society either collapsed or were profoundly transformed to accommodate the new social and economic order. The switch from an Atlantic-orientation and a reliance on foreign trade to a westward-orientation and interest in developing the domestic market economy occurred after the Panic of 1797. This financial and commercial crisis shook the foundations of the Atlantic credit system and the entire Atlantic economy. Between 1797 and America's next major panic in 1819, market connections to the backcountry and the subsequent changes in urban production caused significant alterations in the American social structure. These changes had fundamentally transformed American society, allowing a capitalist social and economic order to become well established in the consciousness of Americans at the dawn of the Jacksonian period, and moving America from its postcolonial period to a national one.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

The best way to explore America's transition is to focus on an American entrepot and its relationship to its backcountry and the Atlantic world. The colonial mercantile economy of the eighteenth century was based on the export of staple goods, usually agricultural products, from coastal ports. The export trade supported a vibrant household economy structured around familial and local social connections. This was a face-to-face

²² Michael Warner, "What's Colonial about Colonial America?" in Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000),

society in which the farmers producing the goods in the backcountry would have interacted with and known many of the shopkeepers, artisans and merchants in the port. Thus to understand how mercantilism supported the household economy, and how the household economy reinforced the colonial social order, requires that the focus be placed on a specific community and region. To gauge the degree of change in post-Revolutionary America, the focus of the study must subsequently remain on that community and region. Of all the communities in Colonial British America to choose from, Baltimore and the mid-Atlantic region are arguably the best test cases.

Baltimore Town came into existence by legislative act in 1729, but languished as a backwater of empire until the mid-1740s. The town was a case study in the importance of mercantilism to colonial development; without a staple export, the scarcely populated region was dominated by subsistence farming and the town was unable to grow. Once a staple product emerged in the mid-1740s, however, Baltimore and its hinterland ballooned in population. A struggling hamlet of no more than a few hundred people in 1750, Baltimore Town had a population of 6,000, a thriving mercantile trade, and a blossoming household economy by the eve of independence. The wartime trade during the Revolution proved a tremendous boon to Baltimore's growth, as the Royal Navy never blockaded the port during the conflict. At the conclusion of hostilities, Baltimore was poised to surge ahead as one of the republic's leading cities, and in the several decades after the Revolution, Baltimore's population indeed grew faster than that of any other major American port, including New York City. If revolutionary economic change happened anywhere in America after the Revolution, it would have happened in

Baltimore—the new republic's most dynamic city. Thus Baltimore and the mid-Atlantic region beyond serve as the ideal test case for taking the measure of independence.

The first four chapters focus on the integration of Baltimore and the mid-Atlantic region into the British Atlantic economy, and the persistence of mercantilism and traditional social and economic patterns in Baltimore after the Revolution. Chapter one discusses the origins of Baltimore Town and its relation to the mid-Atlantic backcountry between 1729 and the 1770s. The chapter explores the importance of mercantilism to colonial development, the reasons for Baltimore's languishing condition between 1729 and 1744, its surge in growth after 1744, and the creation of a vibrant household economy. Chapter two discusses Baltimore during and immediately after the Revolutionary War. The chapter explores the threat to Baltimore's prosperity from Congress's nationalist economic agenda in 1774-1776, the town's subsequent recovery and growth thanks to Congress's embrace of free trade, the hopes at war's end that free trade would remake the Atlantic world, and how those hopes were ended by the renewal of European mercantilist restrictions that now excluded the United States. Chapter three discusses the American reaction to the European mercantilist restrictions during the 1780s and 1790s. The chapter explores how a neo-mercantilist approach dominated American thinking about political economy, how this reliance on foreign trade proved ruinous in the 1780s, and how the revival of trade during the French Revolution reinforced the neo-mercantilist economy. Chapter four discusses the persistence of the household economy and the traditional social order despite several crises and challenges to traditional society in Baltimore during the 1790s.

The last five chapters focus on the transition from an Atlantic-oriented to a westward-looking economy, and the subsequent eclipse of the traditional social order. Chapter five discusses the hard times following the Panic of 1797, and how this commercial crisis helped draw together a broad-based effort to re-orient the city's economy away from overseas trade and towards the backcountry. Chapter six discusses the myriad efforts of Baltimore's merchants and artisans, as well farmers and shopkeepers in the mid-Atlantic backcountry, to expand the return trade to the backcountry after 1800. The chapter discusses the importance of turnpikes, banks and credit, newspapers in this process, as well as the emerging trade rivalry between Philadelphia's and Baltimore's business communities for market connections in the Pennsylvania backcountry. Chapter seven discusses the economic impact of the backcountry trade on Baltimore's urban economy. The chapter discusses how increased competition and opportunity gave rise to industrialization and a nascent manufacturing class, how the new manufacturers re-envisioned the division of labor, and how the new manufacturers subsequently demolished customary rights and traditional relationships within the workplace. Chapter eight discusses the eclipse of the household economy, and how the rise of the manufacturers forced fundamental changes in artisans' workshops, the changing nature of gender relations within the urban household, and the disappearance of the prevailing ethos of mutual obligations and deference that characterized the colonial social order. Chapter nine discusses how these emerging tensions within Baltimore exploded into violence during the riots of 1812. The chapter explores how the polyvocality of the rioters and the confused nature of the violence demonstrates that by 1812, the city's working people had not yet developed into a coherent working class with a clear sense of

class consciousness. The riots thus provide a microcosm of change in Baltimore, providing the opportunity to peer into the *mentalité* of the city and discover how far the market revolution had crept into the consciousness of Americans.

The epilogue, "Frederick Douglass's Baltimore," extends the analysis to the Panic of 1819 and the hard times of the 1820s, when the fault lines in the city's social structure that were already visible in the riots of 1812 became more calcified. Even to an eight-year old enslaved boy from Talbot County on Maryland's rural Eastern Shore, the racial and class divisions that thereafter characterized the new social structure of Jacksonian America were apparent. If Rip Van Winkle had gone into the mountains again in 1800, and taken another flagon of liquor from the curious Dutch fellow, he would have found the transformation in American social and economic relationships in 1820 as incomprehensible as he found the country's political changes in the 1790s.

PART ONE
BALTIMORE AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

CHAPTER ONE

CHARLES CARROLL'S BALTIMORE

Few considered the land worthy of their attention, much less their fortunes. For decades, the marshy shores of Maryland's Patapsco River remained a backwater, unsettled and ignored by Indians and Europeans alike. Captain John Smith was not impressed with the river. When he surveyed the Chesapeake Bay for the Virginia Company in 1608, he recorded that the Patapsco was the only uninhabited navigable river along the Chesapeake's western shore. He wasted little time in the area, commenting briefly on the river's red-stained clays and quickly moving on to discuss the more impressive rushing waters and craggy promontories of the Susquehanna further north. Little changed with the coming of colonists. The *Ark* and the *Dove* carried the first English settlers to Maryland in 1634, but it was not until 1659 that the first land patents in the area of the Patapsco. No one took an interest in the river's northwest branch, where the town of Baltimore was eventually established, until 1668. Thomas Cole received a patent that year for 550 acres on the north shore, and the tract thereafter became known as Cole's Harbour. Over the next thirty years, however, the land remained mostly uncultivated and unsettled. As late as the 1690s, Captain Smith would have likely recognized Cole's Harbour as the same wilderness he explored more than eighty years earlier.¹ Such were the modest beginnings of the land on which Baltimore Town would

¹ To Smith, the red clay resembled "bole Armoniack," and thus he named the Patapsco the Bolus River. See John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles*, in *The Travels of Captaine John Smith* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1907; orig. 1624), I.

be erected. Within the next century, Baltimore would become an epicenter in the transformation of American society and one of the most dynamic commercial centers anywhere in the Atlantic world. At the turn of the eighteenth century, however, this land, and the shallow, silty basin it overlooked, held a promise that few had seen and none had fully appreciated.

The lack of any interest in Cole's Harbour during the seventeenth century is not surprising, because the area possessed none of the characteristics that planters deemed desirable for the cultivation of tobacco, colonial Maryland's primary cash crop. Indeed, a more unpromising spot would have been difficult to imagine for a tobacco planter. The marshy land surrounding Baltimore rested on the Fall Line between the Tidewater and the Piedmont regions, and most colonials believed that these soils were ill-suited to the cultivation of tobacco. The area soon became known as the "barrens" of Maryland. In a 1722 letter to Charles Calvert, Fifth Lord Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, Philemon Lloyd reported "having traveled over chiefly Barren & Stoney Grounds" to the western shores of the Susquehanna. He thereafter "Spent three days longer in those woods & Among the Barren Hills which," in his opinion, "afford no matter of Sustenance—except for Berrys."² Even if Lloyd and others had judged the Piedmont soils to be appropriate, Cole's Harbour could not accommodate the large ships engaged in

43, 49. According to nineteenth-century historian J. Thomas Scharf, a number of speculators received patents for land "in the neighborhood of Baltimore" when Baltimore County was erected in 1659. In 1661, Charles Gorsuch patented 50 acres at Whetstone Point, but it was Cole who received the first patent for the land on which Baltimore Town itself was established. Cole originally received a warrant for 300 acres on the northwest branch in 1668, but revoked the warrant. He then received the patent for 550 acres later that year. See J. Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore; Being a Complete History of "Baltimore Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1874), 9-11.

² Philemon Lloyd to Charles Calvert, Fifth Lord Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, September 10, 1722, Dulany Papers, MS.1265, MHS.

the trans-Atlantic trade. The steady flow of silt that descended into the basin from Jones Falls, an unnavigable stream that frequently flooded the shoreline, rendered the harbor too shallow for most large merchant vessels. In the dead of winter, the basin often froze over completely.

Despite the apparent limitations of Cole's Harbour, Charles Carroll sensed something hopeful about the place. Known by future generations as "the Settler" to distinguish him from the other famous Marylanders who bore the same name, Carroll had emigrated from Ireland to Maryland in 1688 to become the colony's attorney general. His tenure as a colonial official did not last long. After the Glorious Revolution and its aftermath in British America, Carroll faced the incessant threat of anti-Catholic discrimination from the newly established Protestant authorities. The downward turn in his political fortunes encouraged the Settler to reorient his interests away from office-holding towards land speculation and mercantile pursuits. Cole's Harbour soon caught Carroll's attention. In early January 1695, at a time when winter ice usually blocked the basin's access to the sea, Carroll surveyed the area. Unlike almost all who had come before, the Settler saw opportunity along the marshy shores, and made the decision to acquire the land.³

Over the next twenty years, the naysayers seemingly proved correct about Cole's

³ For the history of Charles Carroll the Settler, see Ronald Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: A Carroll Saga, 1500-1782* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 37-97. According to Scharf, Carroll surveyed 1,000 acres in Baltimore County, including the 550-acre tract known as Cole's Harbour, on January 13, 1695. Carroll received a patent for this land, including Cole's Harbour with additions, on February 10, 1696. Two years later, on February 17, 1698, Cole's Harbour was re-surveyed and it was discovered to contain only 510 acres. A new patent was subsequently issued to James Todd on June 1, 1700, and the area was renamed "Todd's Range." According to Ronald Hoffman, Carroll finally acquired Cole's Harbour (or Todd's Range) in 1701. See Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 11, 14-15, and Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland*, 120.

Harbour, as the area continued to be a largely ignored and unsettled backwater of Baltimore County. As had been the case in the seventeenth century, settlers avoided Cole's Harbour because its hinterland seemingly could not support tobacco, the silty basin and recurrent flooding on the Jones Falls limited the usefulness of the port, and the marshy lands made the area an uncomfortable place to live. Carroll only managed to rent land to a few tenant farmers, and in 1711, Jonathan Hanson rented 31 acres to establish a mill. Yet Carroll's fortunes were not adversely effected by the sleepy condition of Cole's Harbour. By the time of his death in 1720, the Maryland magnate had acquired almost 48,000 acres of land through marriage, inheritance, land patents, foreclosures, and purchases. Cole's Harbour ultimately represented less than two percent of the Settler's eventual landed holdings.⁴

The Settler's two surviving sons, Charles Carroll of Annapolis and Daniel Carroll of Duddington, jointly inherited the land around Cole's Harbour. At first, the brothers were satisfied to rent land to tenant farmers, and thus manage Cole's Harbour as their father had done. A 1726 survey of the area revealed that only a few tenements and a single tobacco warehouse had been raised on the land since the construction of Hanson's mill. Yet the importance of Cole's Harbour to the Carrolls' fortunes was increasing. Displaying the same speculative streak that his father often demonstrated, Charles Carroll of Annapolis patented a 10,000-acre tract in 1723 in the valley formed by the Potomac and Monocacy Rivers in what is today Frederick County, Maryland, west of Baltimore. The Carrolls were not alone in taking an interest in western Maryland. Speculators like Benjamin Tasker and Daniel Dulany, and even Lord Baltimore himself engrossed lands

⁴ Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland*, 68-73, and Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 14-17.

in Monocacy Valley during the 1720s. With the prospects for large-scale settlement of the backcountry increasing rapidly, the Carroll brothers conspired to raise a town at Cole's Harbour.⁵

The growing importance of the backcountry was not missed by the colonial assembly in Annapolis, but the question remained where to place a town on the Patapsco River. The unforgiving conditions at Cole's Harbour and the shallowness of its basin worried many legislators that a town on the Northwest Branch would not succeed. The early favorite among the members of the assembly was Moale's Point on the southern branch of the river. Moale's Point was more accessible for merchant ships, and it was already the terminus for a ruddy wilderness road that cut a path into the western reaches of Baltimore County. However, John Moale, the English merchant who owned the land at Moale's Point, was not prepared to relinquish control over his property. He realized that the red-stained clays that Captain John Smith had noticed more than a century ago betrayed the presence of potentially lucrative iron deposits in the land, and thus Moale rushed to Annapolis to quash any plan to raise a town there. With Moale's Point eliminated from consideration, interest grudgingly swung towards Cole's Harbour. A petition by the "Inhabitants in & About [the] Potapsco River" had already been submitted on July 14 "Praying leave to Erect a Town on [the] Peice of Land belonging to Messrs Charles and Daniel Carroll," and the legislators had few alternatives remaining. A bill to establish "Baltimore Town" was introduced to the assembly on July 23, 1729 and was

⁵ The survey was conducted by Richard Gist for Edward Fell, a Quaker from Lancashire, England who settled east of Jones Falls at what became known as Fell's Point. See Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 18. On land speculation in the Monocacy River Valley, including the 10,000-acre tract "Carrollton," see Grace Tracey and John Dunn, *Pioneers of Old Monocacy: The Early Settlement of Frederick County, Maryland, 1721-1743* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1987).

quickly approved by both Houses before the end of the month. When Lieutenant Governor Benedict Leonard Calvert signed the bill on behalf of the Lord Proprietor on August 8, Baltimore came into existence as a legal creation.⁶

Unfortunately for the Carroll brothers, the act that created Baltimore Town only succeeded in changing the name of the place. After the town was laid out, there was an initial surge of interest by twelve investors who immediately bought fourteen of the original sixty lots. After this initial series of sales, however, the town's commissioners did not sell off another lot for six years. Disturbed by the lack of development, and fearful that naysayers may have been correct in doubting the town's prospects, Charles Carroll of Annapolis ended the six-year drought in 1735 by purchasing 26 of the remaining lots. He hoped that his efforts to resell the lots would prove more fruitful than those of the town commissioners, but over the next eight years, Carroll was unable to sell off any of his lots. The town's prospects became even murkier when the Maryland assembly accepted the petition of a rival group of property owners to erect "Jones Town" immediately east of Baltimore Town, on the other side of Jones Falls. Neither town prospered, and as late as 1744, both places existed more as legal entities than as places of commerce and settlement. Town development along the Northwest Branch of the Patapsco appeared doomed.⁷

Despite the inaction of the town commissioners and the establishment of Jones

⁶ William Hand Browne, et. al., eds., *Archives of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883-1972), XXXVI, 396-97, 425, 428-29, 464-65. For John Moale's opposition to a town at Moale's Point, see Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 19.

⁷ Wilbur Coyle, *First Records of Baltimore Town and Jones Town, 1729-1797* (Baltimore, 1905), 1-9, and Charles Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen: The Gentry of Baltimore County, Maryland, 1660-1776* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 137-39.

Town, the primary obstacle to the growth of Baltimore Town was the continued lack of a cash crop in the hinterland. In a 1754 letter to Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, Governor Horatio Sharpe wrote, "if one considers [Baltimore] with respect to Trade, the extensive Country beyond it leaves no room for Comparison." He believed that "were a few Gentlemen of fortune to settle there and encourage the Trade it might soon become a flourishing place." Until such time, however, he feared that the town "cannot make any considerable Figure."⁸ Sharpe's connection between the growth of Baltimore and the expansion of its hinterland brought into clear relief the essential problem of urban development in colonial America: for a town to thrive, it had to become an entrepot or center for processing and preparing agricultural goods for export. Throughout history, trade has been an important consideration in the development of cities, but the narrow conditions for urban growth in British America demonstrate more than anything else how much overseas trade was the defining characteristic of colonial life from Nova Scotia to Barbados.⁹ Baltimore Town was failing because there were no major agricultural exports from western Maryland prior to the 1740s, and thus no need for an entrepot. Put another way, Baltimore Town

⁸ Governor Horatio Sharpe to Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, May 2, 1754, in Browne, et. al., *Archives of Maryland*, VI, 57.

⁹ For the development of the British Atlantic's mercantilist economy, see especially David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For the importance of mercantilism to urban development in the British American colonies, see John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 71; Ronald Hoffman and Carville Earle, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," *Perspectives in American History*, 10 (1976): 7-78; Gary Nash, "The Social Evolution of Preindustrial American Cities, 1700-1820: Reflections and New Directions," *Journal of Urban History*, 13 (1987): 115-45; and Franklin Knight and Elizabeth Leis, *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

and its hinterland were not yet integrated into the British Empire's mercantilist economy.

MERCANTILISM AND THE MID-ATLANTIC

The word *mercantilism* is familiar to students of American history as a way to describe the commercial realities and predominant beliefs about trade in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Unfortunately, familiarity with a word does not always mean that the word is understood. Mercantilism's basic tenets are seldom defined, and thus the meaning of the word is usually understood in the context of its policy manifestations, and not in the context of its philosophical and economic foundations. Because many of the Britain's *mercantilist* policies enacted in the 1760s and 1770s established new taxes and regulations on American commerce, the meaning of the word *mercantilism* can be carelessly reduced to the promotion of trade and a propensity for state intervention in the economy. During the twentieth century, political debates over trade policy have further obscured its meaning by conflating the words *mercantilism* and *protectionism*. Not surprisingly, several historians in the mid-twentieth century decided that if *mercantilism* is defined in this way, it becomes useless for the study of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic world and ought to be abandoned as an unneeded abstraction. Such a radical solution is not necessary, nor is it desirable. As historian Eli Heckscher argued, *mercantilism* can be a very useful intellectual construct as long as "the problem of the relationship of means to ends [is] . . . placed at the centre of every work . . . that wishes to probe the subject thoroughly."¹⁰

¹⁰ Eli Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, trans. Mendel Shapiro, 2d ed. revised by E.F. Söderlund (New York: MacMillan, 1955), I, 2. For a review of the mid-twentieth century debate over the utility of the word *mercantilism*, see Charles Wilson, "Mercantilism: Some Vicissitudes of an Idea," *Economic History Review*, 2d ser., 2 (1957): 181-88.

Thus to gain an understanding of the British mercantilist world and Baltimore Town's place within it, it is crucial to carefully define *mercantilism* by addressing its ideological precepts.

The growth of overseas empires in the seventeenth century created an interest in better understanding the causes of the wealth of nations, and politicians and philosophers in the nations with the fastest growing empires, France and Great Britain, took the lead in uncovering the fundamental principles of political economy. Mercantilists embraced the idea of an essentially zero-sum economy in which wealth could neither be created nor destroyed, only transferred. This view rested on a general theory that money that possessed an intrinsic or universal value, and it was this general theory of money that represented the organizing principle of mercantilist thought. Prior to the seventeenth century, most writers considered money only in relation to a general theory of prices.¹¹ Although the new mercantilist theory of money is discernible in the thinking of early seventeenth-century writers, including Sir Thomas Mun, Sir William Petty, and John Graunt, it was John Locke brought the doctrine into specific, theoretical focus in the 1690s in two pamphlets. Locke argued that money, by which he meant silver, was

¹¹ Mercantilist thought was certainly not limited to just France and Great Britain. For mercantilist alternatives on the continent, see Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, I, 56-77, 339-72, and Terence Hutchinson, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 87-106, 248-72, 298-307. On the intellectual advances of early mercantilist writers towards a general theory of money in the seventeenth century, see Hutchinson, *Before Adam Smith*, 27-55. Although the association between value and price had been a concern of western thought since Aristotle, the price inflation of the sixteenth century invigorated interest in the question. Two outstanding examples were Martin de Azpilcueta Navarro, *Commentario resolutorio de usuris* (1556), and Bernardo Davanzati, *Discourse upon Coins* (1588). Few sixteenth-century writers attempted to develop a general theory of money. An important exception was Jean Bodin. In his *Les six livres de la république* (1576), Bodin argued that prices did not rise because of greater quantities of gold and silver, but thanks to the devaluation of currencies through the debasement of coins. He fell short, however, of directly arguing the mercantilist position that gold and silver possessed either intrinsic or universal values.

unique among all the materials and commodities in the world in that it possessed an intrinsic value. The value of all other commodities were subject to change, but “silver is that which mankind have agreed on, to take and give in exchange for all commodities as an equivalent.” He did not extend the same consideration to any other commodity—even gold. Unlike silver, gold was “not the money of the world, and the measure of commerce, nor fit to be so.” The value of silver, and only silver, was a fixed, universal constant. In regards to policy, Locke believed that government should neither seek to regulate interest rates nor modify the quantities of silver used in the coinage of money.¹²

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, where the values of currencies change from moment-to-moment around the world, the mercantilist belief that money has an intrinsic, fixed value seems arbitrary. The idea that silver alone has this characteristic borders on mysticism and seems closer to alchemy than economics.¹³ Yet Locke’s formulation was grounded on the confluence of natural law philosophy and emerging scientific empiricism. Just as Sir Isaac Newton, René Descartes, and Sir Francis Bacon

¹² Locke concluded that once denominations were set, and the interest rates had reached their natural levels, they should not be altered by state authority. Ironically, the immediate goal of Locke’s pamphlets, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of the Interest and Raising the Value of Money*, and *Further Considerations Concerning Raising the Value of Money*, was to convince Parliament to vote in favor of recoinage and a lowering of the interest rate from 6 to 4 percent. Evidently the value of British money and the interest rate did not match what Locke considered to be their “natural levels.” See John Locke, *Further Considerations Concerning Raising the Value of Money* in *The Works of John Locke* (London: T. Davison, 1812), V, 144, 151-52. Despite Locke’s insistence on silver as the universal monetary standard, Great Britain recognized the gold standard between 1816 and 1931.

¹³ To some twentieth-century minds, however, many of the assumptions that Locke made regarding intrinsic value were not at all arbitrary. Indeed, until President Richard Nixon took the United States off the gold standard on August 15, 1971, having a fixed value for currencies pegged to the value of gold was a fundamental part of U.S. monetary policy. Thus instead of seeing protectionists as modern-day mercantilists, those who argue for a return to the gold standard should be seen as the closest approximation to mercantilists in the twenty-first century. Contemporary advocates for a return to the gold standard include 1996 Republican Vice-Presidential candidate Jack Kemp, and Jude Wanniski, the editor of *The Wall Street Journal* from

introduced laws governing the natural world, and Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf embraced the tradition of natural law philosophy that perceived a natural order to society, Locke and other mercantilists sought to introduce natural laws which governed commerce and trade. What may be considered arbitrary today was, by the early eighteenth century, accepted as fundamental. To Locke, the rarified position of silver was as self-evident as one's natural rights to life, liberty, and property.¹⁴

Having established that the centrality of money in the balance of trade, it followed that the causes of the wealth of the nations rested in having more silver in proportion to others. Locke and most other mercantilists did not succumb to a facile reductionism regarding bullion. Wealth was not a function of the absolute amount of silver that a

1972 to 1978.

¹⁴ There were mercantilists who maintained that the value of money could change. Those who identified with Locke's position are usually called "metallists" and those who doubted that money held an intrinsic value were called "cartalists," but the differences between these two camps were not as severe as might be imagined. Charles Davenant, a sometimes Member of Parliament and the Inspector General of Exports and Imports between 1705 and 1714, was a cartalist. He maintained that "money is at bottom [valued] no more than the counters with which men, in their dealings, have accustomed to reckon." Locke would not have disagreed with this formulation, having argued that the standard value of money was indeed set by "the universal consent of mankind." Davenant only digressed from Locke's view in that he believed universal consent could change, "and from hence arises what we commonly call intrinsic value." Locke doubted that humanity was quite so fickle, although he did admit that in theory, under extraordinary circumstances, the value of money could indeed shift. He even reserved a right to governments to intervene in the economy for the purpose of changing the value of silver when "there [was] an absolute necessity shown of such a change." Charles Davenant quoted in Hutcheson, *Before Adam Smith*, 52, and Locke, *Further Considerations Concerning Raising the Value of Money* in *The Works of John Locke*, V, 139, 144. The differences between the two camps were thus largely confined to theoretical. One spectacular exception was the divide between metallists and cartalists over whether or not paper money was inherently inflationary. Benjamin Franklin, a cartalist, argued throughout his life that paper money represented an acceptable alternative to silver coins. Metallists usually pointed to the failed schemes of John Law, another cartalist, as proof of the contrary. A Scottish banker, Law fled to France prior to the Act of Union in 1707. In Paris, he established the *Banque Générale* that the government nationalized as the *Banque Royale*. With this privileged position, Law created the Mississippi Company and adopted an inflationary and speculative plan to develop Louisiana. The speculative "bubble" he created collapsed in 1720. See Hutcheson, *Before Adam Smith*, 134-40.

nation possessed, but “in having more in proportion than the rest of the world.” He argued that “in a country not furnished with mines, there are but two ways of growing rich, either by conquest or commerce.” During the reign King Louis XIV, France followed both of these mercantilist strategies by making war against the Dutch and seeking commerce with Spain. Jean Baptiste Colbert, the king’s chief minister after 1661, interpreted French policies as being a “war of money” against the rest of Europe in which commerce became “a perpetual and peaceable war of wit and energy among all nations.” Locke considered conquest impractical for Great Britain, and believed that “nobody is vain enough to entertain a thought of our reaping the profits of the world with our swords.” Unlike the Spanish, who could mine gold out of the ground, or the French, who could effectively make war against their neighbors, Locke believed that “Commerce, therefore, is the only way left to [Britain].” This presented a challenge, because commerce could only succeed when a nation possessed “an overbalance of trade,” by which Locke meant a positive balance of trade.¹⁵

The “balance of trade” was a means of measuring the success of government policies in bringing silver into the nation. Sir Thomas Mun and Edward Misselden brought the mercantilist conception of the balance of trade into clear focus during the 1620s, and Sir William Petty and John Graunt brought greater sophistication to its calculation in the 1660s with their studies of “political arithmetic.”¹⁶ It involved more

¹⁵ Locke, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of the Interest and Rising the Value of Money*, in *The Works of John Locke*, V, 13. Colbert quoted in E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), IV, 526.

¹⁶ See Sir Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade from England unto the East-Indies* (New York: The Facsimile Society, 1930; orig. 1621); Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce or the Balance of Trade* (New Haven, CT: Research Publications, 1974; orig. 1623); and Sir William Petty, *Treatise on Taxes and Contributions* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1980; orig.

than just measuring the difference between the value of a nation's imports and exports. The idea that a trade surplus benefited the economy while a trade deficit hurt the economy was not a novel concept. For the mercantilists, any activity that effected the flow of bullion in the Atlantic economy had to be considered as important. Thus earnings from the carrying trade, including commissions, interest, shipping fees, and insurance, as well as taxes collected on overseas trade and British government revenues expended in the colonies were just as important to the balance of trade as imports and exports. In terms of policymaking, mercantilists did not simply focus on tariffs, bounties, and quotas in trade policy. Taxes, government spending, interest rates, laws governing insurance, regulations over the shipping trades also needed to be properly weighed in the calculation.¹⁷

Mercantilists split over how best to achieve a positive balance of trade. In France, Colbert believed that it was vital for the state to impose stiff controls over commerce in all its forms so that France might not be outwitted by its adversaries. To this end, he adopted prohibitory and protectionist policies designed to centralize economic control

1662). For a general survey of seventeenth-century English mercantilist thought, see Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

¹⁷ Throughout the sixteenth century, writers in both Britain and the continent emphasized its importance in international trade. In 1549, Sir Thomas Smith argued in *A Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England* that "we must alwaies take care that we bie [buy] no more of strangers than we sell [to] them." Smith extended his analysis to the state level, arguing that these principles applied as much to the commonwealth as a whole as they did to the individual. What was novel in seventeenth-century mercantilist thought compared to Smith's formulations was the centrality of money in the balance of trade. See Sir Thomas Smith, *A Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England; or A Compendious or Brief Examination of Certain Ordinary Complaints* (London: William Smith, 1581), quoted in Hutcheson, *Before Adam Smith*, 20. The emphasis on a balance was likely the result of the introduction of double-entry book-keeping into England during the early sixteenth century. These techniques had been in use in Italy since at least the fourteenth century. See Rich and Wilson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, IV, 500.

over both domestic and foreign trade in much the same way that his predecessors, Cardinals Richilieu and Mazarin, had centralized political control. This highly interventionist approach to political economy, sometimes known as Colbertism, dominated French policies for almost a century.¹⁸ Unlike absolutist France where Colbert's policies reigned supreme, late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century British authorities debated the merits of free trade on some issues and promoted state intervention on others. For example, Charles Davenant opposed a measure being considered by Parliament in the late 1690s to prohibit the importation of silk from India. Proponents of the bill believed that protection was needed for the English woolens industry, but Davenant argued "trade is in its nature free, finds its own channels and best directeth its own course; and all laws . . . to limit and circumscribe it, may serve the particular ends of private men, but are seldom advantageous to the public." A year later, however, Davenant reversed course, arguing that "in first appearance those traffics seem hurtful which export money, but when we come to reason upon things by figures, we find that such trades are beneficial, when they bring in one way more bullion than they carry out." For British mercantilists, free trade and state intervention were not ends unto themselves, but strategies to be selectively employed towards achieving a positive balance of trade.¹⁹

¹⁸ During the late 1750s and 1760s, Jean François Quesnay and the physiocrats challenged the consensus view of French mercantilism. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976). For a survey of Colbert's economic policies and his influence over French mercantilism, see Charles Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism* (Hampden, CT: Archon Books, 1964; orig. 1939), 2 volumes, and Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, I, 78-220 and 345-50.

¹⁹ Charles Davenant, *Essay on the East India Trade* (London, 1771; orig. 1697), I, 98-99, quoted in Hutcheson, *Before Adam Smith*, 50.

The debate over free trade versus state intervention extended to British America as well. In Boston, merchant Thomas Banister also altered his position on the subject depending on circumstances. In a 1715 letter to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Banister argued that Parliament ought to provide bounties for American naval stores so that New Englanders could better afford British manufactures. If not, England would suffer a double loss; New Englanders would be forced into making their own manufactures instead of producing naval stores. This would limit overseas trade and adversely effect Great Britain's balance of trade. A few years later, Banister argued that Parliament ought not interfere in any way in the American trade with the French and Dutch West Indies. The trade employed many ships, and the sale of rum and molasses for poorer quality fish, unfit in Banister's estimation for the British West Indies, produced a positive balance of trade for New England. This silver could then be plowed into the Atlantic trade in the purchase of British manufactures, thus positively effecting Great Britain's balance of trade. Otherwise, the New England colonies, "because of their unfavorable balance of trade[,] would be forced to manufacture for themselves" to the detriment of the British. For Americans like Banister, Parliamentary regulations over trade did not amount to tyranny, as a later generation would claim, just poorly designed policy.²⁰

The plurality of arguments over trade strategy demonstrates that the definition of the term *mercantilism*, as it applies to the study of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world,

²⁰ Banister quoted in Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization, 1606-1865* (New York: Viking Press, 1946), I, 137. Parliament disagreed with Banister's position, and in 1733, levied duties against the importation of sugar from the non-British West Indies to the British North American colonies. For the most part, however, the British did not strictly enforce the provisions of the law until after 1763. See Dorfman, *The Economic Mind*, I, 135-41.

should not be reduced to a question of state intervention versus free trade. Until about 1720, it was unclear whether or not the interventionist approach would prevail in the struggle to direct British mercantilism. Bernard Mandeville strongly supported the interventionist position, and “had the Mortification for several Years to meet with Abundance of sensible People against this position.” To Mandeville’s pleasure, the interventionists finally cobbled together a rough consensus in the Parliament in the 1720s, and succeeded in passing several prohibitory and restrictive trade laws aimed at promoting the export of British manufactures, particularly woolens. State intervention in overseas trade thereafter dominated British mercantilist strategy, but it was a means to an end—insuring a positive balance of trade for Great Britain—and not the end itself.²¹

The growing mercantilist consensus in Great Britain in favor of state intervention shaped the economic relationship with the expanding North American colonies. For most mercantilists, it seemed appropriate that in the colonies, where land was cheap and labor was expensive, the production and export of raw materials ought to predominate and manufactures discouraged. In Britain, where land was expensive and labor was cheap, manufactures ought to be encouraged. This arrangement would allow Great Britain to achieve a positive balance of trade with other nations through the re-export of American agricultural produce. The primacy of manufactures in British mercantilist thought is clear in Mandeville’s writing: “Spain and Portugal . . . may for ever buy for ready Money as long as their yearly increase of Gold or Silver continues,” but the British “could not

²¹ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), II, 111. For Parliament’s actions to protect the woolens industry see *Statutes at Large*, 10 William III, c.2; 8 Anne, c.6; 4 George I, c.7; 6 George I, c.14; 7 George I, c.7; and 7 George I, c.12. (The citations here refer to the year of the monarch’s reign, and the chapter in which the law appears. Thus 10 William III, c.7 refers to the seventh chapter in the tenth year of King William III’s reign.)

continue long to purchase the Goods of other Nations if they would not take our Manufactures in Payment for them.” Great Britain typically experienced a strongly positive balance of trade with the northern colonies in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, and a strongly negative balance of trade with the southern colonies in the Chesapeake, Carolinas, and especially the West Indies. The balance of trade with the Chesapeake and the Carolinas evened out in the 1750s, and swung decidedly in favor of Great Britain after 1760. Colonies that experienced trade deficits with Great Britain typically made up the shortfall in their balance of trade through trade surpluses with the West Indies, building ships for remittance, revenues from the carrying trade, and smuggling. Yet policymakers in Great Britain did not fret over the imbalances with particular colonies. As Charles Davenant asserted, “To enquire whether we get or lose by this or that branch of trade is an endless and uncertain speculation; the only question of importance, and which indeed should employ the thoughts of considering men, is, in the main, do we get, or lose.” As long as the aggregate Atlantic trade provided a relatively balanced exchange between Great Britain and its colonies, British mercantilist strategy was satisfied.²²

Until the Revolutionary crisis became truly heated in the 1770s, most Americans embraced British mercantilist thinking about the role of the North American colonies within the Atlantic economy. As late as 1766, in a competition sponsored by John

²² Charles Davenant, *An Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Balance of Trade* (London, 1771; orig. 1699), I, 386, quoted in Hutcheson, *Before Adam Smith*, 53, and Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, II, 113. On the value of exports to and imports from England and Scotland by the American colonies, see U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), II, 1176-78. For a detailed study of the colonial balance of trade, see James Shepherd, “A Balance of Payments for the Thirteen Colonies, 1768-1772” (Ph.D., University of Washington, 1966). Also see McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of*

Sargent of London, several prominent graduates of the College of Philadelphia composed dissertations exploring the “reciprocal advantages of a perpetual Union between Great Britain and her American Colonies.” Although the essays varied in approach, each emphasized the importance of the balance of trade. Doctor John Morgan, one of the authors and later a patriot who served as the chief physician to the army, argued that “while Great Britain is employed in manufactures, America ought to be encouraged in raising all sorts of commodities, and exporting them to Great Britain.” The benefits to Britain were clear to Joseph Reed, another author who later became the patriot President of Pennsylvania. American products enabled Britain “to pay the respective balances to those countries with whom she trades on a disadvantageous footing.” Steven Watt, a third author who later fled to British Florida as a loyalist, singled out Sweden, France and the Iberian nations as the countries for whom American trade righted the British balance of trade. From the American side, the imperial system allowed for an ever-expanding standard of living, as Americans became full partners in the growth of consumerism in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world.²³

British America, 71-88.

²³ *Four Dissertations on the Reciprocal Advantages of a Perpetual Union between Great-Britain and her American Colonies* (Philadelphia: William and Thomas Bradford, 1766), 16, 94, quoted in Lawrence Peskin, “To ‘Encourage and Protect’ American Manufactures: The Intellectual Origins of Industrialization, 1763-1830” (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1998), 23, 30. Peskin argues persuasively that the four dissertations adequately represent the American public understanding and acceptance of mercantilism. Of the 190 subscribers to the published edition, Peskin identified 45, of whom 29 became patriots and only 16 remained either loyal to the crown or neutral. See Peskin, “To ‘Encourage and Protect’ American Manufactures,” 18 n.7. On the American satisfaction with the British Empire’s expanding “world of goods,” see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730-1840s* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989); John Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Timothy Breen, “An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776,” *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986): 467-99; Timothy Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the

Despite the triumphal qualities of British mercantilism expressed in the Philadelphia dissertations, prosperity was not evenly distributed throughout the empire. In the West Indies, sugar and coffee were exported at a profit. In the Carolinas, the chief staples were rice and indigo. Planters in Virginia and southern Maryland had cultivated tobacco since the early seventeenth century, and though the trade experienced numerous difficulties in the early eighteenth century, tobacco remained a profitable export and the chief product of the Chesapeake colonies for the remainder of the colonial period. New England relied on the cod fishery, as well as exports of whale oil and timber products such as pitch tar, turpentine, and pine-tree masts. However, those without a staple product to export could not and did not reap the benefits of the Atlantic economy, and the languishing condition of early eighteenth-century Baltimore Town was a classic example. Without an profitable export crop in western Maryland prior to the 1740s, there was nothing that Charles Carroll could have done to change the town's prospects. As long as the region remained a backwater of the British Empire, Baltimore Town would remain a struggling hamlet.

Given the explosion of overseas trade from the North American colonies in the eighteenth century, it is peculiar that farmers in western Maryland failed to produce a suitable export prior by the 1740s. One reason is that the nature of the soil seemingly narrowed the possibilities for suitable crops, at least in the minds of the region's earliest settlers. Few cultivated tobacco, rice and indigo were inappropriate to Maryland's

Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 119 (1988): 73-104; and Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). David Shields points out that not all Americans were wholly comfortable with either the political or the cultural consequences of the growing consumerism. See David Shields, *Oracles of Empire: Poetry, Politics, and Commerce in British America, 1690-1750* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

temperate climate, the seafood available in the Bay, including a variety of shellfish, turtles, and mollusks, were nearly impossible to transport overseas in the eighteenth century. Instead, early settlers diversified their agricultural yields, growing a mix of corn, rye, wheat, oats, barley, hemp, and flax, as well as raising cows, horses, pigs, and sheep. Although wheat and corn later became important American exports to Europe, most nations on the continent supplied their own demand for grains in the early eighteenth century. There were, of course, numerous short harvests, but supplies from elsewhere on the continent usually made up for the shortfalls. Thus Baltimore's hinterland possessed little of interest to Europe, and backcountry farmers settled for an essentially subsistence-based economy while the town continued to stagnate.²⁴

THE STRUGGLE FOR A STABLE HINTERLAND

In addition to the frustrations of the Atlantic economy, several colonial challenges also delayed the development of an export-oriented hinterland in western Maryland. The ongoing struggle in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century between the Penn and Calvert families over the rightful boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland caused enormous political and economic instability. Until this dispute finally abated in the 1750s, settlers lived with the persistent threat of harassment from both Maryland and Pennsylvania officials and violence from their neighbors. The persistent

²⁴ On the dominance of mixed agriculture and the lack of staple specialization in early western Baltimore County, see Elisabeth Kessel, "Germans on the Maryland Frontier: A Social History of Frederick County, Maryland, 1730-1800" (Ph.D., Rice University, 1981), 153-58, and Thomas Williams and Folger McKinsey, *History of Frederick County, Maryland* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1967; orig. 1910), I, 16-18. On European grain self-sufficiency during the early eighteenth century, see Rich and Wilson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, V, 57-89.

threat of Indian raids and war with the French also limited the development of a stable farming population. Until the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, intermittent conflict with the region's Indian tribes caused enormously high rates of out-migration from western Pennsylvania and Maryland. Between the proprietary squabbles and the threats from the French and the Indians, it was unlikely that farmers in Baltimore's hinterland would have been able to meet a European demand for grains even if that demand had existed.

The dispute over the rightful boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania centered on the legal definition of Maryland's northern border in the proprietary charter granted by King Charles I in 1632 to Cecilius Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore. Article III of the charter specified the border as "that Part of the Bay of Delaware on the North, which lieth under the Fortieth Degree of North Latitude." Calvert, his successors, and nearly all Marylanders, interpreted this clause to mean that their colony extended to forty degrees North latitude, or the fortieth parallel. This was a misinterpretation of the language. The charter specifies the border as being where the fortieth degree of North latitude begins, which is at the thirty-ninth parallel.²⁵ However, no one challenged the Calverts' interpretation for decades because no one had a vested interest to do so. This all changed in 1681 when King Charles II granted a proprietary charter to William Penn for a new colony immediately to the north of Maryland.

²⁵ Just as the first degree of northern latitude *begins* at the equator, or 0° 0' 0", and *ends* at the first parallel, or 1° 0' 0", the fortieth degree *begins* at the thirty-ninth parallel, or 39° 0' 0", and *ends* at the fortieth parallel, or 40° 0' 0". Charter of Maryland, 1632, in Francis Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America, Compiled and Edited Under the Act of Congress of June 30, 1906* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909).

Penn's charter specified the southern border of Pennsylvania "by a Circle drawne at twelve miles distance from New Castle Northward and Westward unto the beginning of the fortieth degree of Northern Latitude, and then by a streight Line Westward" along that latitude. The language of Penn's charter ought to have cleared up any misunderstanding, because the fortieth parallel lies much further to the north of New Castle than just twelve miles, and a circle drawn at twelve miles distant from New Castle indeed bisects the thirty-ninth parallel. Clearly, the boundary between the two proprietorships was intended to be the thirty-ninth parallel, but Charles Calvert, Third Lord Baltimore, was unwilling to concede the argument. King Charles II could have stepped in and resolved the dispute once and for all, but the king instructed the two proprietors to work out their differences between themselves. A meeting between the two colonial magnates occurred in Anne Arundel County in December 1682, but neither man was willing to compromise on the hundreds of thousands of acres at stake.²⁶

The boundary dispute generated some commercial antagonism between Maryland and Pennsylvania during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, but the struggle of wills between the colonial governments began in earnest in the 1720s.²⁷ The catalyst for the renewed controversy was land speculation in the Monocacy River Valley by Maryland's landed magnates. Beginning with the 10,000-acre tract for Carrollton patented to Charles Carroll of Annapolis in 1723, others quickly engrossed thousands of

²⁶ Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania, 1681, in Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States*, and Aubrey Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1981), 81-82.

²⁷ At the turn of the eighteenth century, Quaker merchants tussled with Maryland's Governor Francis Nicholson over royal customs policies in the disputed area. See Gary Nash, "Maryland's Economic War with Pennsylvania," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 60 (1965): 231-244.

acres in the region. Benjamin Tasker established Tasker's Chance, a 7,000-acre tract just to the north of Carrolton, and further up the river, Charles Calvert, Fifth Lord Baltimore, established Monocacy Manor, a 10,000-acre tract. Daniel Dulany patented thousands of acres in small parcels throughout the area, as well as a 3,850-acre patent just south of Lord Baltimore's Monocacy Manor. All of these tracts fell well within the Maryland proprietary, but others did not. By the mid-1720s, Maryland settlements extended well into the disputed territory with Pennsylvania, including a tract claimed by Edward Parnell at the site of what later became Hanover in York County. Disturbed by the encroachments into Pennsylvania, officials from the Quaker colony forcefully drove off the settlers on Parnell's lands in 1728.²⁸

The actions of the Pennsylvania authorities did not abate the desires of Marylanders to lay claim to the disputed territory. Once again, Charles Carroll of Annapolis was at the forefront of this movement. In 1730, he patented Carrollsburg, a 5,010-acre tract straddling the line claimed by Pennsylvania. More provocative were the actions of Thomas Cresap, who received a Maryland patent in 1730 for the lands previously patented to Edward Parnell. Although Maryland Governor Samuel Ogle personally assured Pennsylvania Governor Patrick Gordon that all disputes "shall always be avoided as much as possible on my part," Ogle colluded with Cresap to intimidate and drive out Pennsylvania claimants. Cresap led about fifty men across the border, and violence soon followed. John Wright, who established a ferry across the Susquehanna, related to Governor Gordon that Marylanders had instigated "a violent & Riotous

²⁸ Tracey and Dern, *Pioneers of Old Monocacy*, 23-44, and Daniel Wunderland Nead, *The Pennsylvania-German in the Settlement of Maryland* (Lancaster, PA: Pennsylvania-German Society, 1914), 127.

Assault” against peaceful settlers. He particularly singled out Cresap’s partisans, whom Wright claimed had “Killed the horses of Such of our people” and “Assaulted those who were sent to look after them, and threatened them Highly if they should Come there again.” Yet the boldest stroke of all came from Lord Baltimore, who issued a proclamation in 1732 inviting settlement into western Maryland and Pennsylvania. He assured all potential settlers that the Maryland government would use “any reasonable Method that shall be proposed for the Ease of such New Comers in the payment of their Taxes.” He also pledged that settlers “shall be as well Secured in their Liberty & property in Maryland as any of his Majestys Subjects in any part of” British America.²⁹ By the mid-1730s, hundreds of settlers were pouring into the region, and armed clashes between Pennsylvanians and Marylanders proved nearly continuous. Any hope for trade from the area under these circumstances would have been foolish.

The battle for the backcountry came to a boiling point in 1735. Despite assurances of mild taxation, Governor Ogle mustered the Baltimore and Harford County militias, numbering about 200 to 300 men, and dispatched them along with Baltimore County Sheriff John Hendricks to force collections of taxes from Pennsylvania settlers who refused to recognize Maryland’s authority. According to John Wright, the Marylanders harassed him and thirty other Pennsylvanians, but hostilities did not break out thanks to the arrival of 150 Pennsylvania militia. With the military solution at an impasse, both colonial governments issued arrest warrants the following year to intimidate settlers from the other colony. On September 5, Philadelphia magistrates

²⁹ Maryland Governor Samuel Ogle to Pennsylvania Governor Patrick Gordon, May 7, 1732, and John Wright and Samuel Blunston to Governor Patrick Gordon, October 30, 1732, in Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns, 1852), I, 326-27, 363-65, and Lord Baltimore’s 1732 Proclamation, in Browne, et. al., *Archives of Maryland*, XXVIII, 25.

Jeremiah Langhorne and Thomas Greene empowered Lancaster County Sheriff Samuel Smith to arrest Thomas Cresap, and on October 21, Governor Ogle issued a warrant for the arrest of sixty people. Pennsylvania authorities struck first when they threatened to set fire to Cresap's house unless he surrendered. According to Sheriff Smith, Cresap replied "with several horrid Oaths & the most abusive Language against the Proprietor & People of Pennsylvania," and pledged that "they shall never have him till he was a corpse." Smith ordered the house torched, and Cresap managed to make it out just before the house was engulfed by flame. The Maryland Council was outraged and appealed to the Governor Gordon to release of all Marylanders held in Pennsylvania jails. The conflict now had the potential to disrupt far more than a few settlements on the backcountry, and it was at this point that the British finally intervened. Orders in Council issued on August 18, 1737 ended the conflict, and a provisional line between the two colonies was set the following year. Royal authorities suspended land grants, and fixed the border fifteen miles south of Philadelphia, or close to the thirty-ninth parallel. Yet the Orders also specified that farmers in the disputed area could remain on the land until a permanent settlement was made. With no action on the part of the proprietors to reach such a settlement, it was only a matter of time before violence erupted once again.³⁰

The catalyst for renewed conflict was John Digges, an Irish land speculator from Prince George's County who had been at the forefront of selling Maryland patents to land in the disputed area since 1731. Digges was also a swindler. By the early 1740s, he had

³⁰ Deposition of John Wright (1735), Warrant for Thomas Cresap's Arrest (1736), and Deposition of Samuel Smith (1736) in Hazard, *Pennsylvania Archives*, I, 464-65, 489, 513-15, and Browne, et. al., *Archives of Maryland*, XXVIII, 99-106, 111-19. Also see Nead, *The Pennsylvania-German in the Settlement of Maryland*, 121-39, and Dieter Cunz, *The Maryland Germans: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 47-54.

sold off more land than he had title to, and in 1745, petitioned the Maryland assembly to grant him new lands to meet his obligations. To Digges, his request simply amounted to a clarification of his holdings rather than a new land grant. In actuality, Digges's request amounted to a land grab for 3,679 acres in direct contradiction of the King's edict. Yet Maryland authorities approved the scheme anyway, and conflict quickly ensued. The Penns sued the Calverts for a breach in the 1737-1738 agreements, Baltimore County Sheriff Thomas Norris attempted to arrest several Pennsylvania claimants, and Lancaster County Surveyor Thomas Cookson warned Maryland settlers that they were in violation of the King's edicts and thus subject to having their lands confiscated.³¹

Even after the Penns won their case against the Calverts in British courts in 1750, backcountry skirmishes continued, with members on both sides destroying property and further disrupting any hope for trade. The conflict came to a head in 1752 when a quarrel between claimants led to the murder of Dudley Digges, John Digges's son. A Pennsylvania farmer, Martin Kitzmiller, was responsible for the shooting. Maryland Governor Benjamin Tasker appealed to Pennsylvania Governor James Hamilton to move the trial to a Maryland court, because, according to Tasker, the murder was committed "within the Limits of this Province [Maryland]." Of course, Pennsylvania officials refused the request, and the trial was held in York where a Pennsylvania court deemed the shooting accidental and acquitted Kitzmiller of all charges. Thereafter, most Marylanders lost interest in pursuing claims in the disputed area, and in 1763, the proprietors finally agreed to a permanent solution. Two surveyors, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, spent the next four years setting the border along the 1738 provisional

³¹ Cunz, *The Maryland Germans*, 54-56.

line. They marked the “Mason-Dixon Line” at one-mile intervals with stone monuments on which the Calvert coat-of-arms appeared on the Maryland side, and the Penn coat-of-arms appeared on the Pennsylvania side. These markers did not, however, always stay in the same place. Settlers commonly used them as fence posts, and some even employed the monuments as fireplace lintels.³²

In addition to the disruptions caused by the border controversy, backcountry settlements were periodically threatened by war against neighboring Indians. At the same time that Samuel Blunston complained to the Pennsylvania Council about Thomas Cresap’s threat to backcountry settlers, he also related several acts of violence by Indians. One gruesome incident had occurred on May 4, 1737 when two Indians entered Samuel Bethel’s house and asked for something to drink. Blunston stated that Mrs. Bethel persuaded the Indians to leave, but as soon as she locked the door behind them, the Indians allegedly “Darted a Board thro’a Glass Window.” Two neighbors, Daniel Southerland and John Judson, intervened to prevent the Indians from “doing further Mischief, whereupon one of the Indians with a knife wounded Southerland in the Belly” deep enough “so that his Bowels came out.” The Indian then turned to Judson “and stabbed him in the Breast.” Incidents like the bloody one at the Bethels’ home were committed by both settlers and Indians with relative frequency in the backcountry. The limestone deposits in much of western Maryland and Pennsylvania made the area extraordinarily fertile, and several tribes had contested for its control. American settlers, whether from coastal Maryland or eastern Pennsylvania, were caught between the

³² Browne, et. al., *Archives of Maryland*, XXVIII, 532; Nead, *The Pennsylvania-German in the Settlement of Maryland*, 140; and Susan Stranahan, *Susquehanna, River of Dreams* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 43 n.5.

Delaware to the east, the Piskataway, Patuxent, and Potomac to the south, the Shawnee and Tuscarora to the west, and the Susquehannock and Seneca to the north. Officially, Pennsylvania and Maryland enjoyed relatively peaceful relations with the neighboring Indians, but depositions like Blunston's reveals a much different reality for those living in the backcountry.³³

The Indians were not the worst threat to western settlements. Indeed, nothing proved more disruptive than the frequent wars for imperial mastery between France and Great Britain. Hostilities in the 1720s, 1740s, and 1750s caused many settlers to flee, and thus parts of the backcountry were in a continual state of fluctuation. Settlement had to recommence at the close of each war, creating a process of expansion and contraction that prevented settlers from developing anything more than a frontier exchange economy—an export trade to the coast was a remote prospect. The worst of these conflicts was the so-called French and Indian War of 1754-1763.³⁴

In 1748, the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle officially ended the conflict between France and Great Britain known to Americans as King George's War, but the peace did not settle the question of the two imperial powers' overlapping claims on the Ohio River Valley. Before the diplomats even convened, the French began planning to extend their fortifications into the Ohio Valley. Under the Marquis Duquesne de Menneville, the new

³³ Statement of Samuel Blunston (1737-38) in Hazard, *Pennsylvania Archives*, I, 547-49.

³⁴ John Florin, *The Advance of Frontier Settlement in Pennsylvania, 1638-1850: A Geographic Interpretation* (University Park, PA: Penn State University, Department of Geography, #14, May 1977); Jack Sosin, *The Revolutionary Frontier, 1763-1783* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1967), 82; Solomon Buck and Elizabeth Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939), 137, 204-205; Paul Doutrich, "The Evolution of an American Town: Yorktown, Pennsylvania, 1740-1790" (Ph.D., University of Kentucky, 1985), 144; and Judith Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place': Economic, Social, and Gender-Role Development in a Backcountry Town, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1750-1810" (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1994), 89-90.

Governor-General of Canada, these plans became fully realized with the construction of forts at Presque Isle on Lake Erie in 1753, and another, Fort Duquesne, located at the confluence of the Ohio, Monogahela, and Allegheny Rivers. Virginia's Governor Robert Dinwiddie was the first colonial official to react to the new threat, sending 300 militia under Colonel Joshua Fry and Lieutenant-Colonel George Washington to Fort Duquesne in 1754 to oppose the French. After this expedition failed, the British dispatched an expeditionary force under General Edward Braddock to lay siege to the wilderness outpost in 1755. When the French and their Indian allies massacred Braddock's forces, panic swept the backcountry.³⁵

As the war progressed, the rural population of western Maryland and western Pennsylvania disappeared as settlers congregated into Carlisle, York, or Frederick, or headed east to Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Annapolis. Reports flooded into the *Maryland Gazette* that the houses of backcountry settlers were in flames, and the settlers were on the move. Washington recorded in 1756 "That the Maryland settlements are all abandoned is certainly a fact . . . confirmed yesterday by Henry Brinker, who left Monocacy the day before, and who also confirms that three hundred and fifty wagons passed that place to avoid the enemy within the space of three days." The situation in Pennsylvania was just as bleak. Governor Robert Hunter Morris worried that so many people "had quitted the County of Cumberland, one of the most fertile settlements in North America," that "great quantities of grain" now laid "at the Mercy of the Enemy."

³⁵ King George's War was known in Europe as the War of the Austrian Succession. The French fort at Presque Isle was located at the site of what became Erie, Pennsylvania, and Fort Duquesne was located at the site of what became Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For the origins of the French and Indian War and the conflict's early campaigns, see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000), 11-134.

By 1758, the backcountry was indeed controlled by the Indian allies of the French. British General John Forbes reported that Indians “are scalping every day and have broke up all the settlements.”³⁶ With the backcountry in chaos until the war ended in 1763, merchants in Baltimore Town could expect little produce to arrive for export abroad. As the fate of the countryside went, so did the fortunes of an entrepot.

SIGNS OF GROWTH

Despite the clarion of dismay surrounding the prospects over the backcountry, Charles Carroll of Annapolis remained unbendingly optimistic about Baltimore Town and western Maryland. He had reason to be. In the seven years following 1744, Carroll sold off all but three of his twenty-seven lots in Baltimore Town, and by the early 1750s, more than 90 percent of the town lots were under private ownership instead of Carroll's or the town commissioners. By the mid-1750s, prices for town lots rocketed from 0.2d per square foot to more than 3d per square foot, an increase of 1,500 percent. The Maryland assembly responded to the growth in interest in the town by authorizing additions to Baltimore in 1747, 1750, and 1753 that expanded the size of the town by 75 acres. A struggling hamlet with only a few hundred inhabitants in 1750, Baltimore Town surpassed Annapolis in population within a single generation, its population reaching 6,000 by the Revolution.³⁷

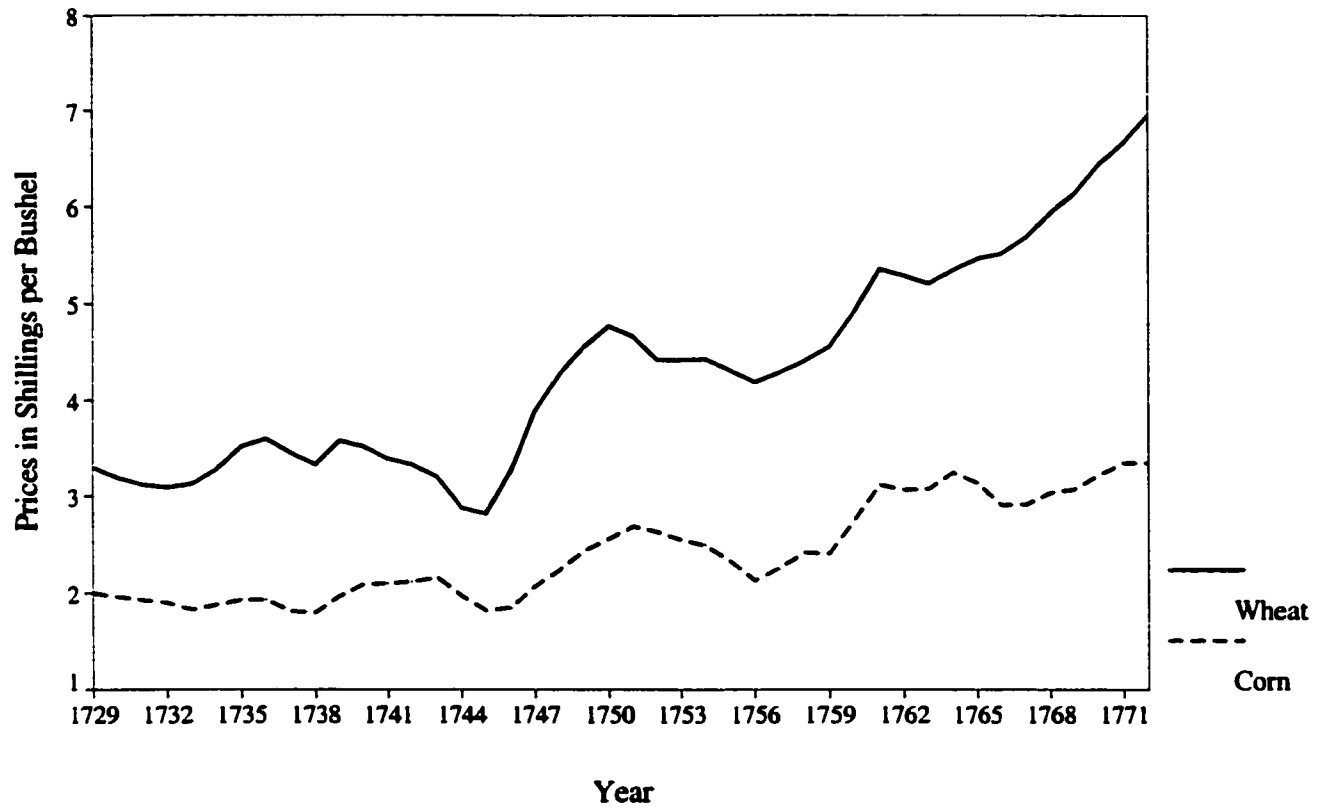
³⁶ Washington quoted in Cunz, *The Maryland Germans*, 81. Draft of a letter by Gov. Robert Hunter Morris, (probably 1756), Gratz papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, case 15, box 18, quoted in Judith Ridner, “‘A Handsomely Improved Place’,” 86; and General John Forbes to Abercromby, April 22, 1758, in Alfred Proctor James, ed., *Writings of General John Forbes* (Menasha, WI: Collegiate Press, 1938), 69, quoted in Ridner, “‘A Handsomely Improved Place’,” 87.

³⁷ Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen*, 141–46.

The sudden rise of Baltimore Town after 1744 resulted from changes in the Atlantic economy and the ability of settlers in a limited area of the town's hinterland to respond to those changes despite backcountry hardships and frontier violence. By the mid-eighteenth-century, Europe began experiencing sharp food shortages. Although harsh winters or exceptionally hot summers caused short harvests in some areas, changes in the weather were not the primary cause of the crisis. Indeed, advances in crop rotation and other agricultural methods allowed both crop yields and grain production to increase in the last half of the eighteenth century by an average of 20 or 25 percent on the continent, and more than 50 percent in England. Yet the impressive gains in production were more than offset by the surge in population, and thus many nations faced recurrent famines. In 1700, England produced 1,780,000 tons of grain and exported 35,000 tons; in 1800, English production had risen to 2,670,000 tons, but the nation's grain exports disappeared completely. On the continent, where grain production had not increased as quickly as in England, shortages were impossible to avoid. Many nations were being pushed to the brink of a Malthusian crisis in which famines could only be averted by grain imports from America. The lack of European grain surpluses also meant that imperial powers found it impossible to provision the rapidly expanding populations of their colonies in the West Indies. Shortfalls in the Caribbean also had to be made up by increased food supplies from the North American colonies. The inevitable result, as seen in Figure 1-1, was the steady inflation of wholesale prices on wheat and corn. Wheat prices doubled in the late 1740s, and surged again in the late 1750s, thereafter increasing steadily until the Revolution. Corn prices rose less dramatically, but nearly doubled from approximately 2½s per bushel to almost 4s per bushel by the early 1770s. Flour prices

Figure 1-1

Five-Year Moving Averages on Mid-Atlantic Grain Prices, 1729-1772



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), II, 1197.

rose in the same period from less than 1d per pound to more than 2d per pound.³⁸

With the advent of grain shortages in Europe, the mid-Atlantic region was poised to become the breadbasket of the Atlantic world. However, the disruptions to backcountry settlements caused by the Pennsylvania-Maryland border struggle and the persistent conflict with Indians meant that not all mid-Atlantic farmers were poised to take advantage of the new economic realities. Initially, only those farmers in the southeastern parts of Frederick County, newly erected from Baltimore County in 1748, as well as the remaining parts of Baltimore County itself were able to respond to the shifts in the Atlantic economy. These settlers were somewhat insulated from the troubles raging further north and west. Although the largely German-immigrant population in Frederick and Baltimore counties did not adopt a monocrop culture, they were aware of the increasing commercial value of their crops. The percentage of their farms engaged in wheat and corn production tripled between 1749 and 1775, and the activities of these settlers did not go unnoticed by British authorities. In 1771, William Eddis commented that “what chiefly tended to the advancement of settlements in this remote district, was the arrival of many emigrants from the Palatinate, and other Germanic States.” He believed that the progress made by these settlers “induced multitudes of their enterprising countrymen to abandon their native homes, to enjoy the plenteous harvest which appeared to await their labours in the wild, uncultivated wastes of America.” Maryland’s Governor Horatio Sharpe would have agreed. In a letter to Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord

³⁸ For shifts in European production of grains, see Rich and Wilson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, V, 74-89. For Baltimore’s response to the shifts in the Atlantic economy, see Clarence Gould, “The Economic Causes of the Rise of Baltimore,” in *Essays in Colonial History Presented to Charles McLean Andrews by His Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 225-51. For wheat prices in colonial America, see *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 1197.

Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, Sharpe indicated that the Germans who resided in or near Baltimore Town had become “Masters of small Fortunes.”³⁹

In addition to rising European demand, colonial actions also sped the transition from tobacco to grain cultivation in parts of Maryland. In 1747, Governor Samuel Ogle spearheaded the effort to pass a Tobacco Inspection Act. The new law established eighty warehouses where inspection officers chosen by local vestrymen would approve quality tobacco for export and destroy trash tobacco. Those who supported the Act hoped that it would prevent fraud in the collection of customs and curtail officers’ fees. The aim of the legislation was not to encourage farmers to abandon tobacco production, but those on marginal lands who grew nothing but trash tobacco were nonetheless forced to make that decision. The problem was especially acute on the Eastern Shore, where sandy soils predominated along the chief waterways. Yet it was not just farmers on marginal soil who switched to grain cultivation after 1747. As tobacco prices continued to stagnate and grain prices steadily increased, farmers throughout the Eastern Shore participated in the transition. Exports of tobacco from Eastern Shore plantations declined at both Chestertown and Annapolis after 1750. Average annual totals for both ports amounted to 7.9 million pounds during the 1740s, only 6 million in the 1750s, and 4.7 million in the 1760s. Average annual wheat and corn exports from Oxford and Chestertown increased over the same period from 19,000 bushels to 121,000 bushels, and historian Paul Clemens calculated that the total grain surplus in Talbot and Kent Counties ballooned from 28,000 bushels in the 1730s to 832,000 bushels in the 1760s. Even slaveholders

³⁹ William Eddis, *Letters from America, Historical and Descriptive; Comprising Occurrences from 1769 to 1777 Inclusive* (London, 1792), 99; Governor Horatio Sharpe to Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord Baltimore and Lord Proprietor of Maryland, May 2, 1754, in *Archives of Maryland*, VI, 57; and Kessel, “Germans on the Maryland Frontier,” 153-62.

made the switch to grain cultivation. During the 1740s, tobacco accounted for more than 50 percent of the agricultural output from plantations with enslaved workers in Kent County. In Talbot County, the number was closer to 75 percent. By the 1760s, wheat and corn accounted for approximately 67 percent of agricultural output in Talbot County, and almost 90 percent in Kent County.⁴⁰

The transition to grain cultivation on the Eastern Shore eventually contributed to the growth of Baltimore as a port, but in the period before the Revolution, most of the produce of the Eastern Shore went to the Philadelphia market. According to a report made by Loyalist Robert Alexander in the 1770s, approximately 75 percent of the Eastern Shore's wheat had been shipped to Philadelphia in the years immediately preceding the war. Alexander's report was part of an American Loyalist effort to convince the British authorities not to abandon the war in North America in the wake of the Franco-American alliance, and was, in part, a propaganda effort to discredit an earlier report delivered by British Major General Charles Grey in 1779 that stated the war in North America was now hopeless. Yet Alexander's report was also a startlingly objective statement on the economic realities of the Eastern Shore, and it demonstrated that less than 20 percent of Baltimore's grain exports originated across the Bay.⁴¹

Farmers in western Pennsylvania were also unable to contribute significantly to the growing prosperity of Baltimore Town in the colonial period. Unlike Frederick and

⁴⁰ Paul Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 168-205, and Land, *Colonial Maryland*, 180-81.

⁴¹ Edward Papenfuse, "Economic Analysis and Loyalist Strategy During the American Revolution: Robert Alexander's Remarks on the Economy of the Peninsula or the Eastern Shore of Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 173-95.

Baltimore Counties, much of western Pennsylvania remained a troubled area after the conclusion of the French and Indian War, and did not develop into a stable hinterland by the Revolution. Indian raids along the river continued after the conclusion of the French and Indian War, prompting a mob action by backcountry settlers in February 1764. At least 200 settlers from Paxton Township in western Lancaster County, in what became Dauphin County, marched on Philadelphia to demand action from the Quaker-dominated government. A group of seven Philadelphia authorities led by Benjamin Franklin, Mayor Thomas Willing, and Attorney General Benjamin Chew met the "Paxton Boys" at Germantown on the outskirts of Philadelphia on February 6. Although the city officials proved successful in convincing the marchers to seek formal legal redress for their grievances, Indian raids against western Pennsylvania settlements continued until the frontier conflict was finally ended by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768.⁴²

Backcountry settlers in Pennsylvania also faced new land disputes after 1763 with Virginia authorities in the far western reaches of the colony, and Connecticut settlers along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River in northern Pennsylvania. These disputes proved nearly as paralyzing as the earlier struggle between the Calverts and the Penns over southern Pennsylvania. In 1773, Pennsylvania established Westmoreland County, its first extension of political jurisdiction west of the Allegheny Mountains. Virginians had not given up their claims on this land, however, and under the colony's

⁴² There were some entrepreneurs who managed to establish profitable commercial connections between western Pennsylvania and Baltimore. One such exception was Ephraim Blaine of Carlisle. Yet a mark of his unusually adventuresome spirit is that after the Revolution, Blaine shifted his commercial interests to speculative ventures in the deerskin trade of New Orleans and the lower Mississippi River Valley. See Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place'," 287-88. On the fragmented condition of Paxton Township and the subsequent march of the Paxton Boys, see George Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry* (New York: Garland Publications, 1989).

new governor, Lord Dunmore, the Virginia assembly countered Pennsylvania's actions by erecting the District of West Augusta in 1774 in what is today western Pennsylvania. Despite the shift from the royalist government of Lord Dunmore to the patriot governments of Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson after 1776, Virginia's policies regarding western Pennsylvania did not change. In 1776, the Virginia assembly carved three counties from the District of Augusta, and over the next four years, authorities from both states competed for taxes and the loyalty of the backcountry residents in far western Pennsylvania. Settlers faced intermittent violence, destruction of property, harassment by officials from both governments, and a general inability to develop any significant trade.⁴³

The struggle for northern Pennsylvania between Connecticut settlers and Pennsylvania claimants proved even more paralyzing than the challenge from Virginia in the far western part of the state. The charter granted by King Charles II to Connecticut in 1662 specified the southern boundary as the sea, which referred to Long Island Sound, and the western boundary as "the South Sea," which colonists interpreted to be the Mississippi River. This meant that Connecticut included land later granted to New York in 1664 and William Penn in 1681. The potential for long-term conflict was lifted in 1731 when Connecticut and New York officials agreed on a border between the two colonies. Officials in Pennsylvania believed that the deal ended all possible claims by Connecticut on Pennsylvania, an assumption that proved accurate for almost two decades. In May 1750, however, residents of Simsbury, Connecticut petitioned their colonial assembly for a land grant in Pennsylvania. The Connecticut assembly rejected

⁴³ R. Eugene Harper, *The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 1770-1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 8.

the petition, as well as eleven more submitted between 1750 and 1753. Interested settlers thus took matters into their own hands, establishing the Susquehanna Company in 1753, and buying nearly 5 million acres from the Iroquois the following year.⁴⁴

The French and Indian War postponed actual settlement in Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley along the North Branch of the Susquehanna until May 1762. The first settlers were wiped out by Indian raids, but settlers returned in force in 1769. Conflict broke out almost immediately between the Connecticut claimants, or Yankees, and their rival Pennsylvania claimants, or Pennamites, and conflict continued until the Yankees forced a Pennamite surrender in July 1771. Pennsylvania Councilman Joseph Shippen pledged that the colonial government would remove the "Nest of Villains, Murderers and Banditti" from the Wyoming Valley, but authorities failed to act as decisively as Shippen's words. The Yankees' population surged from a few hundred in 1771 to 2,000 in 1774, and approximately 3,000 by 1776. Emboldened by the Yankees' successes, the Connecticut assembly recognized their settlement in 1774 by creating them as the town of Westmoreland attached to Litchfield County. Two years later, the assembly made Westmoreland a separate county within the state of Connecticut. Once again, the Pennsylvania backcountry was plagued by violence and uncertainty.⁴⁵

The continuous disruptions to settlement in rural western Pennsylvania sustained the high rates of out-migration common to the early eighteenth century, and kept the badly fragmented communities from developing into a stable and reliable hinterland for

⁴⁴ Paul Moyer, "Wild Yankees: Settlement, Conflict, & Localism Along Pennsylvania's Northeast Frontier, 1760-1820" (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1999), 15-21.

⁴⁵ Moyer, "Wild Yankees," 21-49, and Joseph Shippen to Edward Shippen, August 21, 1771. Robert Taylor, ed., *The Susquehanna Company Papers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), IV, 251-52, quoted in Moyer, "Wild Yankees," 27.

Baltimore prior to the Revolution. Yet even if these disruptions had not existed, it was unlikely that much of western Pennsylvania's produce would have reached the Baltimore market, because of the lack of adequate transportation throughout the region. The easiest way for farmers to have reached Baltimore would have been to simply float their goods down the Susquehanna River to the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately for those interested in such a strategy, the river was not suited to this. The Susquehanna is the longest non-navigable river in North America. Flatboats descending from the North and West Branches had to disembark at either Harris's Ferry or Wright's Ferry, near the sites where Harrisburg and Columbia were later founded. The river is approximately a mile in width at this point, but it narrowed quickly. At Turkey Hill, just north of the Mason-Dixon Line, the Susquehanna is just one-fifth of a mile wide. The resulting rapids made it impossible for ships to descend the river any further without being dashed against the craggy promontories and jagged rocks of the limestone-walled gorge beyond. The river was just as impassable coming from the opposite direction. When Captain John Smith's expedition reached the head of the Bay in 1608, he discovered that while "Canows may goe a dayes journey or two up" the river, anything larger "could not get two myles up it" before reaching the rocks. This happened near Little Octoraro Creek, close to the site where Port Deposit, Maryland was later founded. From John Smith's time to Charles Carroll's, the Susquehanna's natural boundaries continued to frustrate those who hoped the river could act as a conduit for trade.⁴⁶

Overland transportation proved almost as difficult as negotiating the Susquehanna

⁴⁶ Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles*, in *The Travels of Captaine John Smith*, I, 49. For the Susquehanna River's natural impediments to navigation, see Carl Carmer, *The Susquehanna* (New York: Rinehart, 1955), 445-51, and Stranahan, *Susquehanna, River of Dreams*, 33-37.

River. Prior the Revolution, Maryland followed the typical colonial pattern of allowing individual counties to direct road construction. This strategy proved deficient for three reasons. First, local authorities did not employ modern roadbuilding techniques, usually because the supervisors of road construction were farmers without any specialized training in or knowledge of civil engineering. Common roads therefore deteriorated easily. A surveyor judged the shortest distance using a magnetic compass, measured the elevation using a level, and then measured distances using an instrument called Gunter's Chain.⁴⁷ Road builders then removed boulders and trees, but left tree stumps up to a foot high in the roadway. Rakes and hoes were employed to smooth the roadway, and the road was then considered finished. No significant efforts were taken to insure that the road was level, and the roadway was left unsurfaced. Thus as soon as it rained, the road surface degenerated quickly, turning to mud and making the road nearly impassable. Wagons that tried to push their way through the mud dug deep grooves into the wet earth. When the rains stopped, these gouges dried into hardened ruts and furrows that jutted out at odd angles. Rain also exposed tree roots and boulders, and raised the height of exposed tree stumps. After a few rainy seasons, the road became useless as an avenue for commerce even in good weather.⁴⁸

Many of the problems with the old colonial roads could have been avoided if local officials had repaired the road surfaces. After all, no road is ever finished; once it is built, a road must be maintained otherwise it will deteriorate. Yet regular appropriations for

⁴⁷ Gunter's chain, named for Englishman Edmund Gunter who invented it in 1620, was an iron chain sixty-six feet long. Eighty chains equaled a mile, and ten square chains equaled an acre.

⁴⁸ Donald Jackson, "Roads Most Traveled: Turnpikes in Southeastern Pennsylvania in the Early Republic," in Judith McGaw, ed., *Early American Technology: Making & Doing Things from the Colonial Era to 1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 202-06.

the upkeep of roads were not made. Most county officials followed the time-honored English and colonial American practice of allowing farmers to “work off” their highway taxes by helping to clear local roads after the harvest season. Few farmers believed road work was an effective use of their time and often did not show up for it. When local officials did undertake road work, local routes took precedence over through ways. The decentralized approach to road building sacrificed regional planning for the sake of continued local control.

For decades, farmers in western Pennsylvania and western Maryland had sought to compensate for the poor quality of the region’s glorified horse paths by building wagons that could negotiate the gullies and furrows in the roads. The Conestoga wagon was the solution. First constructed in the early eighteenth century by German settlers along the Conestoga Creek in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, from which the vehicle took its name, the original Conestoga wagons resembled the heavy, box-like farm wagons typical in the Rhineland, Low Countries, and southeastern Britain. As the eighteenth century progressed, backcountry settlers made improvements to the basic European designs. Wheels soon became angled outward from the hub, or “dished” to maximize the strength and resilience of the wagon as it bounded over deep ruts. The body also changed, becoming concave in shape to push the contents of the wagon toward the middle of the vehicle to keep goods from spilling over the sides or out the front or back of the vehicle during transit. The curve of the wagon also gave it a more boat-like appearance than its boxy German and British ancestors. Like the dished wheels, the concave body was designed with the gullies and furrows of backcountry roads in mind.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ For the European origins and precursors to the Conestogas, see J. Geraint Jenkins, *The English Farm Wagon: Origins and Structure* (London: David & Charles, 1961), 22-58. For the evolution

The various improvements made to the Conestoga wagon succeeded in reducing transportation costs, but the effective range of commercial wheat farming from Baltimore remained approximately fifty miles between 1750 and 1775. Beyond that distance, the costs of transporting the grain exceeded 50 percent of the market value of the crop, thus making it unprofitable.⁵⁰ As the Mason-Dixon Line is located approximately fifty miles north of Baltimore, the town's effective hinterland prior to the Revolution could not and did not encompass much of western Pennsylvania. As most of the grain produced on the Eastern Shore was shipped overland to Philadelphia prior to the Revolution, it was therefore the largely German-immigrant settlers of Baltimore and Frederick Counties who formed the core of the Baltimore's hinterland. Despite the limited area of cultivation, annual grain exports from Baltimore amounted to at least 300,000 bushels worth of wheat, flour, and bread by the late 1760s. By the eve of independence, this figure had ballooned to almost 800,000 bushels worth of wheat, or approximately 25 percent of the total wheat and flour exports from British America. Even with a truncated backcountry, Baltimore Town emerged as an important entrepot in the British Atlantic's mercantilist economy.⁵¹

of the Conestoga wagon in America, see Richard Dunlop, *Wheels West, 1590-1900* (New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1977), 29-32, and George Shumway, Edward Durell, and Howard Frey, *Conestoga Wagon, 1750-1850* (York, PA: George Shumway, 1964), 1-26. For transportation costs, see Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940*, 2d ed., (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 148.

⁵⁰ For an annual breakdown of the maximum distance from a port for commercial wheat farming, see Hoffman and Earle, "Staple Crops and Urban Development," 77-78. Between 1750 and 1756, the maximum distance varied only slightly between 32.5 and 36.5 miles. Between 1757 and 1775, there was a much greater range, varying between 27.0 miles in 1757 and 89.5 miles in 1772. Overall, the average was approximately 50 miles.

⁵¹ According to Geoffrey Gilbert, the average annual volume of wheat exported directly from Maryland between 1768 and 1772 was 216,848 bushels, and the average annual volume of flour and bread was 46,772 barrels. Assuming a conversion ratio of 11.43 barrels per ton (each barrel

THE GROWTH OF THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

As Baltimore expanded as a mid-Atlantic entrepot after 1750, the town's local economy grew and its social structure adapted to accommodate the increased commercial activity. Mercantilist assumptions guided this development. From the British perspective, it made very little sense to promote manufacturing enterprises in the colonies. Charles Davenant repeated the standard argument on this point, that "it cannot be the Publick good of a Kingdom to furnish Colonies out of it, with People, when the Product of such Colonyes is the same with the Kingdoms, and so Rivals the Kingdom both in its Navigation and in its Product."⁵² Greater colonial production of consumer goods would divert economic resources, particularly labor, away from the production of agricultural staples, and thus decrease the reliance of the colonies on importing British goods. Such a situation would have upset the balance of trade most mercantilist thinkers

contained 196 pounds), the equivalent volume of combined flour and bread exports was approximately 4,092 tons. According to David Klingaman, it took 51.4 bushels of wheat to produce one ton of flour, thus the average annual volume of flour and bread exports was the equivalent of 210,328 bushels of wheat. By adding this figure to the aggregate exports of bulk wheat, the total average annual volume of wheat, flour, and bread exports was the equivalent of 427,176 bushels of wheat. Assuming that Baltimore accounted for at least 70 percent of Maryland's direct grain exports, which is a very conservative estimate, the city would have exported at least 300,000 bushels of wheat per year by the late 1760s. According to Robert Alexander's report, gross exports from Baltimore in 1774 included 120,000 barrels of flour (the equivalent using the conversion method above of 539,632 bushels of wheat), and 250,000 bushels of bulk wheat. Using the conversion method above, the total grain exports from the city in 1774 amounted to the equivalent of 789,632 bushels of wheat. This amounted to 25 percent of the total for British America. According to Timothy Pitkin, total exports of bulk wheat from British America in 1770 amounted to 851,240 bushels, and bread and flour exports amounted to 45,868 tons, or the equivalent of 2.4 million bushels of wheat. Thus total American exports were the equivalent of 3.2 million bushels of wheat. See Geoffrey Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean, 1750-1815* (Baltimore: Garland Publishing, 1986), 36-37; David Klingaman, "The Significance of Grain in the Development of the Tobacco Colonies," *Journal of Economic History*, 29 (1969): 272; Papenfuss, "The Economy of the Eastern Shore of Maryland," 193; and Timothy Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce of the United States* (Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications, 1980; orig. 1835), 21-23.

⁵² Charles Davenant, *Discourses on the Publick Revenues, and on the Trade of England. In Two Parts* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975; orig. 1698), II, 232.

believed was critical to the wealth of nations. The British therefore favored limiting the scale of industry in British America to local workshops that serviced the immediate needs of the local economy. Mercantilism thus fostered the development of the household economy in British America.

The term *household economy* is similar to mercantilism in that it is an interpretive construct in need of definition.⁵³ At its simplest, the household economy referred to the web of customs, privileges, social conventions, labor arrangements, and local exchange networks practiced by both farm and handicraft households in early modern Europe. Most artisans did not set their eyes on achieving great fortunes, and thus few envisioned expanding their workshops to produce for anything more than the local market. No matter what their particular trade, artisans, much like farmers, engaged in commerce to achieve a “competency,” described by historian Daniel Vickers as “a degree of well-being that was both desirable and morally legitimate.” This ideal was necessarily imprecise, because what constituted an acceptable income changed over the course of an artisan’s life. The size of the family, the age of the producer, and the family’s access to the burgeoning world of consumer goods all figured into the calculation. Yet most

⁵³ My understanding of household production and non-market controls over economic life in colonial America is based in part on Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); J.R.T. Hughes, *Social Control in the Colonial Economy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976); James Henretta, “Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 35 (1978): 3-32; Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); John McCusker and Russ Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 236-57, 309-48; Lucy Simler, “Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania: The Case of Chester County,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 43 (1986): 542-69; Sharon Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully: Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 47 (1990): 3-29.

artisans displayed advanced commercial sensibilities at some level. They were market-oriented without being profit-maximizers. Achieving a surplus was not the goal of economic activity; if a surplus was achieved through hard work, so much the better—it could be consumed for the immediate benefit of the family. However, few artisans envisioned their surpluses as profits that could be re-invested as working capital. As historian James Henretta pointed out, the family's welfare was the preeminent consideration because “the primary economic unit—the family—was also the main social institution.” In the household economy, “family relationships could not be divorced from economic considerations.”⁵⁴

The centrality of family as an organizing principle of the household economy reinforced a gendered division of labor in which husbands and wives contributed in discreet ways to both housework and artisanal production. Men and women did not share the same work responsibilities, but there was likewise no sharp demarcation. There was no separation in the household economy marking women's work as unwaged labor that occurred inside the household, and men's work as waged labor that occurred outside the household. Indeed, urban workshops were typically located inside the family's home, thoroughly blurring the lines between women's and men's work. In addition to doing most of the laundering, cleaning, and sewing, wives also reduced the family's need to make cash expenditures by raising hogs and chickens, selling produce cultivated in

⁵⁴ Vickers, “Competency and Competition,” 3, and Henretta, “Families and Farms,” 21. On the emergence of the household economy in medieval Britain, see Barbara Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). An excellent study of how a familial-oriented desire for “competency” in colonial America gave rise to profit and fortune is Christine Daniels, “From Father to Son: Economic Roots of Craft Dynasties in Eighteenth-Century Maryland,” in Howard Rock, Paul Gilje, and Robert Asher, eds., *American Artisans: Crafting Social Identity, 1750-1850* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3-17. Also see Johanna Miller Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina*

gardens, and producing a range of household goods like soap, candles, and clothing. Middle-class wives oversaw the good behavior of servants, and many worked in their husbands' shops without wage compensation. Wives of laborers helped stave off the family's need for cash expenditures by ragpicking, scavenging for food, clothing, and fuel, selling produce on the streets as hucksters, and in desperate circumstances, stealing. Children, depending on their age, assisted their mothers with many of these household tasks. Wives did most of the cooking, but husbands were typically responsible for hauling the wood, milling the grain, and butchering meat.⁵⁵

Wives and husbands both contributed to the care of children. Wives typically looked after infants and younger children, but once the children were a little older, eighteenth-century literature on child rearing emphasized the importance of the father's role in breaking, or at least bending, their children's wills. Mothers still played a role, but the instruction of older children, and particularly that of the boys, increasingly fell within the broad scope of patriarchal authority. Eighteenth-century authors held that fathers were better able to inculcate a lasting sense of duty, industry, submission, piety, and deference in children. Mothers were admonished for indulging older children too much. According to historian Philip Greven, an intense sense of affection combined with an equally important sense of decorum to reduce the perceived need for discipline in genteel

Backcountry (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

⁵⁵ My understanding of the gendered division of labor in the household economy is based in part on Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 3-154; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 16-68; Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

families. These differences created subtle changes in the goals of child rearing. A sense of reverence was emphasized above duty, which was taken for granted. Fear, which was necessary to achieve a sense of submission, was inconceivable. Thus obligation superseded the importance of submission. In all cases, however, piety and deference remained the preeminent virtues, and patriarchal authority was a constant.⁵⁶

Although the focus on family, local exchanges, and a gendered division of labor were persistent themes in the household economy, there were variations between nations. In France, the internal regulation of industry was almost as far-reaching as the administration of foreign commerce. Beginning with Colbert's ministry under King Louis XIV, the government rested control over much of the nation's trade from both spiritual and temporal lords, as well as autonomous cities. Over the protests of those who asserted traditional and customary privileges, Colbert and his King succeeded in nationalizing the guilds and instituting a uniform and centralized system of police oversight over industrial laws, or *règlements*. A seemingly endless stream of ordinances were closely maintained by a small army of *inspecteurs*, *juges des manufactures*, and *lieutenants généraux de police*. The government also granted exclusive and extensive privileges to specific tradesmen who were designated as *manufactures royales*. Although these businesses remained in private hands, they effectively became an extension of state authority.⁵⁷

In Britain, there was no equivalent to Colbert's vast projection of state power into

⁵⁶ Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Expression, and Self in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 21-61, 151-91, 265-96, and Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 93-100.

⁵⁷ Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, I, 137-220.

domestic economic affairs. Instead, British mercantilist regulations over internal industries allowed the household economy to evolve from the model of the medieval family economy. Following the plagues of the fourteenth century, much of Europe witnessed soaring wages resulting from the profound losses in population. In 1351, Parliament passed a Statute of Labourers designed to control wages through a system of assizes, or nationwide price-fixing. More important, the law also limited entrance into craft trades by barring apprenticeship to anyone who had remained an agricultural worker until age twelve. The purpose was to encourage generational stability in rural areas depleted of population. The effect of the law was to solidify the family as the primary unit of production. Although targeted as rural workers, the 1351 Statute of Labourers did not discriminate between urban and rural circumstances, applying equally to both.⁵⁸

During Queen Elizabeth's reign, regulation of the predominantly urban craft trades was extended in the 1563 Labour Law, often referred to as the Statute of Artificers and Apprentices. Until the law's full repeal in 1814, the Statute of Artificers and Apprentices served as one of the cornerstones of the household economy in Britain. Apprenticeship was set as seven years, and recommended to commence no later than eighteen years of age, and end no sooner than twenty-one, and no later than twenty-four years of age. Restrictions were placed on admittance to some trades, but almost anyone could become an apprentice to a less-skilled artisan. After the passage of the Poor Laws of 1597 and 1601, jurists interpreted the 1563 statute as prohibiting an apprentice from being able to leave a master, and requiring that a master provide both spiritual and occupational instruction to apprentices. Despite the focus on apprenticeship, the law was

⁵⁸ 25 Edward III c.1-7 in *Statutes of the Realm*, and Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, I, 221-27.

silent on the question of guilds. Instead of nationalizing these institutions, as the French had done, the British allowed for a considerable degree of local control over craft organization. British artisans took full advantage of this in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by creating craft societies that specified rules unique to particular occupations. Ultimately these societies played an informal role in the regulation of domestic trade by serving as the primary administrative agents over the apprentice system. Yet a more important aspect of the decentralized system was that it strengthened the sense of community within the handicraft trades.⁵⁹

In America, the household economy developed from the British model, but mercantilist imperatives restricted its evolution. The dependence on imported British goods helped limit the range of Baltimore's handicraft trades to those necessary for either subsistence or the facilitation of foreign commerce. Thus the household economy in America was a stunted version of eighteenth-century British norms. In Baltimore, artisanal production focused primarily on the needs of the grain trade, the maritime economy, and the rapidly increasing population. In 1761, Joseph Ellicott and Hugh Burgess moved from Pennsylvania to Maryland and built several mills on the Patapsco River about ten miles west of Baltimore. The following year, William Moore relocated to Baltimore from Pennsylvania and bought the mill Jonathon Hanson built in 1711. Transportation of the milled flour required the services of coopers and carters, and town itself supported a growing number of bakeries. Shipbuilding also emerged as a central industry in the town. By the Revolution, there were at least four active shipbuilders:

⁵⁹ For the Poor Laws, see 39 Elizabeth c.3 and 43 Elizabeth c.2 in *Statutes of the Realm*. On the interpretation of the Statute of Artificers and Apprentices, see Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, I, 227-33. The Statute of Artificers and Apprentices was repealed in two parts, by 53 George II c.40, and 54 George III c.96.

George Wells, James Morgan, Archibald Buchanan, and William McGachin. Ship construction employed a range of artisans, including carpenters, riggers, caulkers, block and pump makers, sailmakers, and various ironworkers and smiths. All of these trades flourished in the 1760s, and by the following decade, the town also supported two ropewalks. The physical expansion of the town maintained a booming construction industry, employing house carpenters, house joiners, plasterers, brick makers, brick layers, and wharf builders. A large number of butchers, tanners, grocers, tailors, and shopkeepers accommodated the needs of the city's growing population, and taverns, inns, and boarding houses served the needs of travelers.⁶⁰

Compared to London, there were relatively few artisans engaged in luxury trades, highly specialized crafts, or significant manufacturing enterprises. Except for the ropewalks and the brickyards, Baltimore was a town of small, ordinary workshops. By the 1770s there were a handful of cabinet makers, watchmakers, and silversmiths who advertised in Baltimore newspapers, but the town otherwise lacked artisans who catered to more affluent customers. There were no picture frame makers, piano forte makers, or book binders until after the Revolution. Baltimoreans had to rely on imported goods, or go to Annapolis or Philadelphia for these services. There was also little specialization among Baltimore's artisans. Most needed to engage in a range of business ventures to achieve a competency, and thus artisans routinely engaged in farming, tavern keeping, and land speculation. John Gordon, a saddler, also made chairs. Gerrard Hopkins, a

⁶⁰ Charles Kuhlmann, *The Development of the Flour-Milling Industry in the United States* (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1973; orig. 1929), 28-30, and Tina Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town, 1765-1790" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), 37-43.

cabinetmaker, also sold lumber.⁶¹

The stunted evolution of colonial artisan communities also produced a lack of business organization compared to their British counterparts. British mercantilist policies were geared towards maximizing the inflow of silver into Great Britain. In the colonies, this resulted in a general shortage of circulating specie that forced many assemblies into printing paper money. Artisans grudgingly accepted colonial paper as a legitimate alternative, but they preferred to deal in specie. To negotiate the demands of the cash-poor economy, artisans typically extended short-term credit to their customers, allowing them to purchase goods and services on account. In many cases, this type of book debt became a reciprocal arrangement where artisans purchased goods and services from their customers on the same type of short-term credit. The practice reduced the need for frequent cash transactions, encouraged people to do business with those they knew and trusted, and favored local exchanges over competition in a regional market. After a few months, usually without any additional interest charges, accounts were settled in specie. Although British artisans used the system of book debts too, the practice was increasingly archaic as Londoners adopted double-entry bookkeeping instead. Baltimore's artisans sought to reproduce the metropolitan standards set by their London counterparts, but mercantilist world in which the colonial household economy developed made it difficult.

The evolution of the household economy also shaped Americans' sense of social deference and hierarchy. Degrees of social deference established themselves in colonial America in a multitude of subtle ways.⁶² According to historian Rhys Isaac, "the

⁶¹ Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 37-43.

⁶² My understanding of eighteenth-century deference and the social order of colonial America is based in part on Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*

defining characteristics of gentility [in colonial America] are elusive. At first glance being a gentleman resided in the fact itself - a claim made upon the world and accepted by the world." Despite the ambiguities, John Adams had no trouble believing that the "regular and uniform Subordination of one Tribe to another down to the apparently insignificant animalcules in pepper Water" represented the natural order of his society. Adams gained this clarity over his world thanks in part to the connection between the deferential social order and the traditional economic order based on household production and non-market controls over labor. By the early eighteenth century, the bond between the deferential social order and the household economy had been consolidated. Jonathan Edwards commented how beautiful society had become when its members "have all their appointed office, place and station, according to their several capacities and talents, and everyone keeps his place, and continues in his proper business."⁶³

The profits gained from the export of agricultural products, which drew people to the export economy and away from manufacturing activity, was usually sufficient to limit the development of the domestic economy in colonial America. Few colonial assemblies attempted to promote manufacturing, because lawmakers realized that the British Board of Trade had the authority to review all colonial legislation and recommend that the laws

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 200-07; Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 194-98; A.G. Roeber, "Authority, Law, and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720 to 1750," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 37 (1980): 29-52; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 18-142; Richard Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Timothy Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 11-94.

⁶³ Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 131. Adams quoted in Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 20. Edwards quoted in Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 131.

be nullified if deemed contrary to British interests or policies. It was not an idle threat. Between 1696 and 1776, the Board's examinations led to more than 400 different colonial statutes being disallowed by the Privy Council. Occasionally, Parliament itself adopted additional measures to stunt the development of American industry. One such measure was the Hat Act of 1732, which prohibited the trade in hats between colonies and restricted entry into the craft to those who served a formal apprenticeship. Although the law did not set a limit on the number of hatters allowed in the colonies, it proved just as effective in this regard by retarding the growth of the industry. Sometimes, mercantilist policies stimulated colonial manufacturing. In 1750, Parliament passed the Iron Act as a means to promote Britain's woolens trade. The goal was to create a supplementary export trade for the American colonies to balance an increase in the volume of British textile imports into the colonies. Baltimore benefited greatly from this legislation. The red-stained clays that Captain Smith observed betrayed the existence of substantial iron deposits close to Baltimore, and by 1776, there were at least six ironworks established near Baltimore. All totaled, the British American colonies produced one-seventh of the world's crude iron production on the eve of independence. The Iron Act, however, proved the exception; it was more often the case that imperial regulations limited colonial manufacturing.⁶⁴

By the early 1770s, Baltimore was no longer a forgotten backwater of empire.

With its export trade flourishing, the town had become an integrated part of the Atlantic

⁶⁴ For the Hat Act, see 5 George II c.22, and for the Iron Act, see 23 George II c.29, in *Statutes of the Realm*. For growth of iron production in the Baltimore-area and the British American colonies as a whole, see Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 166. On the limitations to colonial manufacturing produced by British mercantilist policies, see Hughes, *Social Control in the Colonial Economy*, 157-62.

economy. The success of the maritime economy had promoted the growth of a nascent artisan community, and allowed the town to grow from a few hundred inhabitants to more than 6,000 by the Revolution. The steady growth allowed Charles Carroll to sell off the last of his lots in 1763, earning him £591.4.1½. Baltimore merchant William Lux could scarcely believe the progress of the town, which seemed to have sprang from the marshy shores of the Patapsco without warning and almost overnight. “It is so much improved,” Lux told his aunt. “We have about 350 Houses in town and more adding every day.” In the harbor, it was not uncommon that “70 or 80 Sail of Vessels Loaded here yearly with Tobacco, Wheat, Flour, and Flaxseed.”⁶⁵ The prospects for the mid-Atlantic entrepot appeared unlimited. The only conceivable threat to the town’s growth seemed to be the drumbeats of war, and by the early 1770s, Baltimoreans could hear the clamor all too easily.

⁶⁵ Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland*, 121-22, and William Lux to S. Lux, July 15, 1768, William Lux Letterbook, New York Historical Society, quoted in Sheller, “Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town,” 29.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LIMITS OF REVOLUTION

On Tuesday, July 2, 1776, the delegates to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia voted unanimously in favor of Richard Henry Lee's resolution that "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be totally dissolved." Two days later, the delegates trumpeted their decision to the world by adopting the Declaration of Independence. Copies of the historic document soon circulated throughout the thirteen newly independent states, and public readings occurred in nearly every town. General George Washington even had the declaration read aloud to the Continental army. The displays affirmed the gravity of the Congress's action, and, not surprisingly, July 4 became a focal point of patriotic celebration. The first anniversary of the declaration was greeted with pomp and circumstance, and in Boston and Philadelphia, the festivities carried on all night long. A correspondent to the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* took great satisfaction in his city's commemorative celebration, expressing the hope that the "glorious and memorable day, be celebrated through America, by the sons of freedom, from age to age till time shall be no more."¹ The parades and fireworks that still mark the anniversary of the historic date more than two centuries later would no doubt please the correspondent to the *Post*.

¹ Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, Edited from the Original Records in the Library of Congress*, 34 vols. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), V, 424, and *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July 5, 1777, quoted in Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 24.

Unlike the events of July 4, 1776, Congress's resolution of April 6, 1776 is not commemorated throughout the republic. Yet the decision reached on that date—to open America's ports to the commerce of every nation except Great Britain—held revolutionary possibilities as far reaching as those in the Declaration of Independence. The measure was primarily intended as a way to provide adequate provisions for the army, yet it promised to turn the economy of the Atlantic world upside down. No longer would American trade be controlled by the British navigation laws, limited by British restrictions, or channeled by imperial dictates. The old mercantilist order would be swept away and replaced by free trade. Just as the Declaration of Independence shattered the monarchical government and confirmed the new nation's political independence, the opening of America's ports promised to demolish British commercial dominance over America and secure the republic's economic independence.²

To many modern observers, a declaration of political independence and support for a free trade policy may appear as two wholly different concerns. For the Revolutionary generation, however, economic and political independence were linked, albeit somewhat loosely. Better than anyone else, Thomas Paine, an émigré writer who forcefully made the case for independence in his pamphlet, *Common Sense*, grasped how the connection between economic and political freedom infused the American idea of independence. Paine argued that any talk of reconciliation with Great Britain was utter foolishness because continued “dependence on Great Britain, tends directly to involve

² For the importance of free trade in the American thinking about independence, see John Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 147-49, and Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 76-77, 85-95.

this continent [America] in European wars and quarrels.” Such conflicts did not benefit Americans, for “whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*.” Political dependence thus equated directly to economic dependence, and the only true way to insure the nation’s prosperity was to end all political association with Great Britain. Once political independence was achieved, according to Paine’s argument, free trade represented the best way to insure the success of the new nation. Paine urged that “as we have, without any good effect therefrom, withheld our trade to obtain a redress of our grievances, let us *now* try the alternative, by *independently* redressing them ourselves, and then offering to open our trade.” The latter would embrace all nations, for “as Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it.” The new republic’s role in the world would therefore be simple and easily defined: “Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a *free port*.”³

Paine’s arguments for free trade became a refrain that the Revolutionary generation repeated over and over again. John Adams incorporated the doctrine later that summer into the Model Treaty, which acted as the template on which all American alliances were thereafter crafted. Adams stressed the importance of the republic’s commercial connections to other nations instead of its political or military associations,

³ Thomas Paine, “Common Sense,” in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot and Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 83, 110. In her study of the making of the Declaration of Independence, Pauline Maier observed that “the promise of economic freedom and expansion was never powerfully yoked to the cause of Independence,” but “the most commonly mentioned benefits [of independence] were . . . economic advantages.” See Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997), 91-92.

and thus embedded free trade as the benchmark principle of American foreign policy. Thomas Jefferson also joined the chorus, writing in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* that “our interest will be to throw open the doors of commerce, and to knock off all its shackles, giving perfect freedom to all persons.” He would later put it even more succinctly: “Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.” In pinning their hopes to free trade during and after the war as the way to insure economic security, Americans set the standard by which they measured complete independence. Failure to realize this goal meant the greatest certainty of loss, to both the prospects for American commerce and the likelihood that the republic would even survive.⁴

THE CONTINENTAL ASSOCIATION

Of all of America’s ports, Baltimore benefited the most from the confluence of political and economic independence. In the span of just a few years, the city vaulted

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 174, and James Ritcheson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1897-1900), I, 323. Walter LaFeber pointed out that the exigencies of war made it necessary to amend the doctrine by remodeling the Model Treaty in December 1776, and dispatching Benjamin Franklin to France, John Adams to the Netherlands, and John Jay to Spain to obtain alliances. Nonetheless, the core of the doctrine, that free trade ought to be the guiding principle of an independent United States and the basis of any future alliance, survived these short-term complications. In practice, commercial reciprocity became conditional most-favored-nation status. It was this principle that was incorporated into the commercial treaties with France, Sweden, Prussia, and the Netherlands. See Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 18-23, 28; Richard Morris, “The Durable Significance of the Treaty of 1783,” in *Peace and the Peacemakers: The Treaty of 1783*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), 233; Thomas Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth Hagan, *American Foreign Policy: A History to 1914* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1988), 3d ed., 10-12, 33; and Robert Smith, “Keeping the Republic: Ideology and the Diplomacy of John Adams, James Madison, and John Quincy Adams” (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1997), 43-123.

from the rank of a second-tier colonial entrepot within the British Empire to become one of the primary gateways for the new republic's foreign trade. The city's wartime ascendance embodied the seemingly unlimited commercial opportunities created by political independence and the revolutionary possibilities of free trade. A correspondent to the *Maryland Gazette* could scarcely believe how much the town had transformed during the war. "What a change—what a transition, in so short a time! Amazing indeed!" Johann David Schoepf agreed. The chief surgeon with the troops from Ansbach, Germany employed by the British as auxiliaries during the war, Schoepf remained in America for a brief time after the Revolution, criss-crossing the American countryside. He spent most of his time in Pennsylvania and Maryland, scribbling down notes about the manners, customs, landscape, people, institutions, and prospects of the mid-Atlantic region. He was most impressed with Baltimore. The quiet town on the Patapsco River had blossomed into a first-tier port of entry for foreign commerce, and the reason was obvious. "Nothing" Schoepf wrote, "was so favorable to the commerce of the place as the last war."⁵ He sensed that with the coming of peace, Baltimore was poised to become a primary gateway for the republic's trade, possibly supplanting Philadelphia as the chief entrepot for the mid-Atlantic region. A decade before Johann Schoepf's tour, however, the chances that Baltimore would enjoy such a rarefied position and a prosperous future were in serious question.

The American path of resistance to British policies between 1774 and 1776 threatened the foundation of British mercantilism, but did so in an altogether different

⁵ *Maryland Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser*, September 28, 1784, and Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784*, trans. and ed. A.J. Morrison (Philadelphia: W.J. Campbell, 1911), I.

fashion than the ultimate direction taken by Congress on April 6, 1776. After Parliament passed the Boston Port Acts in 1774 in reaction to the Boston Tea Party, delegates from twelve colonies convened in Philadelphia in September 1774 for the First Continental Congress. How best to remonstrate against the indignities suffered from British policies headed the delegates' agenda. Instead of adopting free trade to promote economic independence from Great Britain, Congress pursued a proto-nationalist course by cutting off American trade altogether from the Atlantic economy. On October 20, they agreed to form the Continental Association, prohibiting imports from entering America after December 1, 1774, and banning exports from America to Britain, Ireland, or the British West Indies effective September 10, 1775. At the local level, Committees of Observation were established to enforce the provisions of the Association, to ensure that the boycott would have the desired political effect on the British. A similar strategy had worked during the 1760s in winning the repeal of the Townshend Acts, and Congress had every confidence that the strategy would work again. The logic of Thomas Paine's arguments were as yet silent in the American mind.⁶

Unfortunately for moderates hoping for a reconciliation, Lord North, Great Britain's new Prime Minister, was unwilling to alter British policies. With Parliament refusing to bend to American pressure, events quickly spiraled toward open rebellion. In Annapolis, a mob had burned of the *Peggy Stewart*, a brig carrying more than 2,300 pounds of tea. In Virginia, Governor Lord Dunmore had seized the gunpowder from the

⁶ Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, I, 76-77, and Jack Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979), 49-52. The Townshend Acts, or Townshend Duties, were named after Charles Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer under William Pitt [the Elder], who served as Great Britain's Prime Minister between 1766 and 1768.

public magazine in Williamsburg. News of the incident spread throughout the colony “like sparks falling on dry brush” according to historian John Selby; volunteer companies were prepared to march on Williamsburg, and would have done so if not for the efforts of Edmund Pendleton, Richard Henry Lee, and Peyton Randolph, all of whom urged caution. In Massachusetts, the British had attempted to seize the stores of munitions in Concord had led to bloodshed on Lexington Green when Major John Pitcairn’s troops exchanged fire with the colonial militia. Unlike Dunmore’s seizure of the magazine in Williamsburg, however, Pitcairn was denied his prize thanks to the heroic stand of the militia at Concord Bridge.⁷

In the shadow of these milestones in the road to rebellion, the delegates reconvened in May 1775 in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress. The boycott of British trade had failed miserably in winning concessions from Parliament, and Congress quickly resolved to adopt more drastic measures. On June 14, 1775, the delegates agreed to create a Continental army of 15,000 troops—an ambitious goal given that there was not enough specie in general circulation throughout all the colonies to pay for an army of that size. To pay the army’s expenses, Congress agreed on June 22 to issue bills of credit, a time-honored colonial method of financing military operations. The new bills, called Continental Dollars, were not lawful money, meaning they were not considered legal tender for all debts, public and private. Dollars could not be exchanged

⁷ For the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*, see Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 133-38. For the “gunpowder plot” in Virginia, see John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 1-5, 41-43. For the Battles at Lexington and Concord, see Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 114-32. Frederick, Lord North, was a leading voice in British imperial affairs during the 1760s, and served as Great Britain’s Prime Minister between 1770 and 1782. He became a key member of the coalition government behind the Duke of Portland during the latter’s

for specie at a Continental Bank, because Congress did not create such a bank.

Nonetheless, the delegates hoped that Americans would accept Continental Dollars as a universal medium of exchange, and that individual states would assist in withdrawing Dollars from circulation through taxation to prevent the bills from becoming too deflated in value. Every colony had issued bills of credit during the eighteenth century, so there were no illusions regarding the usefulness of Continental Dollars beyond their limited purpose. At the same time, no colony had ever attempted to issue bills of credit on such a massive scale: \$2 million went into circulation immediately, the amount reaching \$6 million by the end of 1775. Thereafter, in the words of historian E. James Ferguson, "Congress stuffed the maw of the Revolution with paper money," emitting an additional \$19 million in 1776, \$13 million in 1777, \$63,500,300 in 1778, and \$90,052,380 in 1779.⁸

The establishment of the Continental Association and the adoption of the Continental Dollar were primarily intended to serve short-term, specific political needs. They were not linked programs, and they were not expected to act together like a revolutionary national economic program. Yet by withholding trade, Congress created the conditions whereby a new domestic market economy could take form. Cut off from Atlantic commerce, America would have to be a self-sustaining nation of farmers, artisans, and manufacturers. To survive, this nascent national economy needed a medium of exchange acceptable throughout the continent. The new Continental Dollars held the

brief tenure as Prime Minister in 1783.

⁸ E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 8-35; Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics*, 202-11; and Curtis Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 23-24.

promise of fulfilling that need. In the early years of the Revolution, Continental Dollars circulated like real money, as Americans almost universally accepted them as payment whether or not their individual state government had declared the Congressional bills as legal tender.⁹

If Congress had continued to develop its proto-nationalist economic policies of 1774-1775, the colonies would have certainly shattered their economic dependence on Great Britain. Yet this course would have likely spelled ruin for Baltimore. Although Baltimoreans had embraced the revolutionary struggle since the Stamp Act crisis in the mid-1760s, the city's economy was ill-prepared in 1775 to embrace the Congress's autarkic policies. The restrictions on trade brought Baltimore's economy to a standstill, and threatened to undermine all the progress that town had made in the previous two decades. The hardships caused several Baltimoreans to wobble on their support for independence. John Smith, a leading merchant of the town, worried that his "Trade will be much injured unless a Reconciliation Soon takes place." George Woolsey shared Smith's worries. An Irish emigre who served on the Committee of Observation for Baltimore Town, Woolsey believed "it is the wish of every well wisher to the Co[u]ntry as we are Sensible we cannot at present exist without England." A few weeks later, Woolsey expressed solidarity with Patrick Henry's fiery oratory, writing that "'tis better to die than be Slaves." After the ban on exports took effect, however, he once again became rather despondent. Writing in late October 1775 to his partner, George Salmon, Woolsey complained that "If I find We Cannot do Enough [business], and trouble [is]

⁹ Individual states also adopted similar programs to promote domestic manufacturing as a way of ending economic dependence on the British. Like Congress's program, however, these efforts sputtered after a year or two and then withered away. See Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 163-70.

likely to continue long, I think to buy some land & Quit business.”¹⁰

With consumers cut off from imported goods, the city’s artisans theoretically stood to gain from the Continental Association. Yet most artisans found it difficult to accommodate the needs of this ready supply of new customers. First, many artisans had relied too heavily on imported tools and semi-manufactured goods for their trades to be able to suddenly dispense with them. Second, many potential laborers joined the ranks of the privateers or the army, and the scarcity of labor caused wages to remain high throughout the war. Third, the city’s household economy had developed around the needs of the maritime economy, and conversion to large-scale domestic manufacturing was not easy.¹¹ If the Congress’s policies had continued, Johann Schoepf’s narrative would have likely been quite different than the one who actually produced. Instead of commenting on how Baltimore was poised to overtake all other cities at the end of the war, Schoepf would have probably written about the city’s abandoned warehouses, wharves fallen into disrepair, and empty workshops no longer busy supporting the city’s mercantile pursuits.

A few scattered industries certainly prospered. Wartime demand created a ready market for those employed in salt-petre works, gunpowder mills, iron forges, gunmaking, cloth and leather production, and shipbuilding. Baltimore merchant George Keepports had

¹⁰ John Smith and Sons to Mildred and Roberts, September 26, 1775, Smith Letterbooks, MS.1152, MHS; Woolsey and Salmon to Robinson and Sandwith, April 10, 1774, Woolsey and Salmon to George and John Wombwells, June 24, 1775, and George Woolsey to George Salmon, October 28, 1775, Woolsey and Salmon Letterbook, Library of Congress. For the Baltimore community’s political opposition to the British, see Paul Kent Walker, “The Baltimore Community and the American Revolution: A Study in Urban Development, 1763-1783” (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1973), chapters 4-5.

¹¹ Tina Sheller, “Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town, 1765-1790” (PhD., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), 170-88.

little trouble in 1779 purchasing £12,000 worth of soldiers' shirts made from roughly-hewn "country linen." Commercial iron production collapsed after 1775, but Charles Ridgely's Northampton Furnace, Charles Carroll of Carrollton's Baltimore Iron Works, and Samuel and Daniel Hughes's Antietam Furnace (near Hagerstown) successfully produced a range of munitions as well as pots and kettles for the army.¹²

Shipbuilders also prospered thanks to the proliferation of privateers as well as the building needs of the Maryland State Navy and the Continental Navy, both of which required lightning-fast turn-around times for the completion of warships. When the Baltimore Committee of Safety purchased the ship *Sidney* from merchant John Smith and refitted the vessel as the twenty-gun sloop-of-war *Defence*, the conversion should have cost £3,710. Instead, the total expense of the refit came to a whopping £11,272.¹³ The rapid pace of the conversion, which spanned only four months (December 1775 to March 1776), was part of the reason for the expense. Another was that labor and shipbuilding supplies were at a premium because so many other building projects and refitting efforts were underway at approximately the same time. At the beginning of December, Congress sent Benjamin Harrison to Baltimore to purchase and refit vessels for the new Continental Navy. Samuel Purviance and William Lux were subsequently employed to refit the schooner *Wasp* and the sloop *Hornet*. Two Baltimore captains, William Hallock and William Stone, were in command of the new warships when they joined Esek

¹² Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 140-77.

¹³ For the cost of converting the *Sidney*, see Sheller, "Artisans of Baltimore Town," 200 n.81. Quoting British estimates for the cost of building warships, Thomas Paine estimated the cost of a 20-gun sloop-of-war at £3,710. However, the actual cost of conversion of the *Sidney* exceeded Paine's estimates for the cost of a 50-gun frigate, which he pegged at £10,606. See Paine, "Common Sense," in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, 96.

Hopkins's squadron in February. Purviance also oversaw the construction of the new Continental Navy frigate *Virginia*.¹⁴ In addition to merchants outfitting their own vessels as privateers, the docks along Fell's Point remained a focal point of activity throughout the war, employing hundreds of the city's carpenters, caulkers, block and pump makers, ropemakers, riggers, joiners, and sailmakers.

By early 1776, Congress recognized the shortcomings of the Continental Association. Although a limited number of individuals benefited from the policy, the policy had failed to secure adequate provisions for the army, and it was no longer clear whether or not the autarkic strategy would insure the nation's economic independence. A sure sign of this failure was the depreciation in the value of the Continental Dollar. Without imports, there was little for which the new paper money could be used to buy, and not surprisingly, the exchange value of Continental Dollars for specie depreciated in near-perfect correlation to the number of Dollars in circulation—a textbook example of

¹⁴ By the eighteenth century, navies rated warships primarily by the number of guns they carried. A vessel's rigging, size, and complement were of secondary concern, and the size of the vessel's guns were of almost no concern at all. In the British Royal Navy, a warship carrying at least 64 guns was called a *line-of-battle ship*, or more simply, a *ship-of-the-line*. Warships carrying 24 to 64 guns were classified as *frigates*. British warships with fewer than 24 guns were classified as *sloops-of-war*. (In the French Royal Navy, warships with less than 28 guns were called *corvettes*, but Americans usually followed the British nomenclature.) Ships-of-the-line were always three-masted and square-rigged. Frigates could have either two or three masts, and could be rigged as a ship or a brig, and on rare occasions, a bark or a snow. Rigging on sloops-of-war varied wildly, underscoring the primacy of the number of guns carried in the classification. A sloop-of-war could be rigged as a sloop, meaning a vessel with one mast rigged fore and aft, or it could be rigged as a schooner, a brig, a bark, a snow, or even a ship. Thus sloops-of-war variably had one, two, or three masts, and could be either square-rigged or rigged fore-and-aft. Most warships carried a mix of guns ranging from smaller six and nine-pounders to the larger eighteen and twenty-four-pound guns. American warships typically carried fewer heavy guns than their British counterparts, but the classifications of the warships of both nations hinged simply on the number of guns, not their size. See Howard Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Ships* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1935), 11-19, 51-57; Howard Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy: The Ships and Their Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 9-51; and N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), Appendix I.

what happens when an increasing supply of money chases a static or declining supply of goods.¹⁵ To gain adequate supplies of war materials, a new course of action was needed, and even before the Continental Association took full effect, Congress determined to relax the impending restrictions. The entrance of non-British vessels into American ports to trade war supplies for American produce was approved on July 15, 1775. A little over a week after the ban on exports to the British Empire took effect, Congress empowered a secret committee to nonetheless make contracts overseas for war supplies. Thanks to the immediate successes of these commercial connections and frustratingly slow development of a domestic manufacturing capacity, Congress took the final step toward ending its brief flirtation with developing a national economy. On April 6, 1776, they embraced free trade by opening American ports to the commerce of every nation except that of Great Britain—a merchants' paradise was seemingly within reach.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Pearson's r was 0.93 for the correlation between the number of Continental Dollars in circulation at the end of each year (1775-1779), and the exchange value of those Dollars in specie at the end of each corresponding year. E. James Ferguson's estimate for the number of Dollars in circulation, and Curtis Nettels's figures for the depreciation of the Dollar's value were used in the calculation of Pearson's r . According to Ferguson, Congress issued \$6 million in 1775, \$19 million in 1776, \$13 million in 1777, \$63.5 million in 1778, and \$90 million in 1779. According to Nettels, \$1.00 in specie equaled \$1.00 in Continental Dollars in 1775. By December 1776, the ratio between specie and paper fell to 1:1.5; by October 1777, the ratio was 1:3; by December 1778, the ratio was 1:6.84, and by December 1779, the ratio was 1:42.2. The method assumes that none of the Continental Dollars issued subsequently left circulation during the period in question—a safe assumption given that states avoided passing any tax law to retire Continental Dollars from circulation. The method also ignores intra-year fluctuations in the exchange value of the Continental Dollar, but this only happened once, in late 1778. The brief appreciation followed a dip in the pace of Congressional emissions in 1777. Once the emissions of 1778 took effect, the depreciation of the Dollar accelerated once again. See Ferguson, *Power of the Purse*, 25-35, and Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy*, 24-25.

¹⁶ Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, IV, 257-59, and Nettels, *Emergence of a National Economy*, 2-6.

THE ENTREPOT COMES OF AGE

Thanks to the vagaries of British military efforts, the revolutionary potential of free trade was not universally realized during the war. One by one, every major American port other than Baltimore, was occupied, blockaded, or destroyed. Baltimore alone enjoyed the unique position of being the largest port not directly blockaded by the Royal Navy at any point during the war. The city was likewise never occupied by the British, nor was it ever seriously threatened. The New England towns did not prove so lucky. After the British evacuated Boston in May 1776, they occupied Newport, Rhode Island in December. From this strategic location in Narragansett Bay, the Royal Navy subsequently interdicted the New England trade. When the French under General Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, occupied Newport in 1780, it appeared that New England would finally see relief from British cruisers. Just three days after the French occupied Newport, however, Rear Admiral Thomas Graves arrived in New York with six ships-of-the-line, all with new copper bottoms. This squadron reinforced the five ships-of-the-line under Vice Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot, and the British naval presence was sufficient thereafter to maintain naval superiority in northern waters for the rest of the war.¹⁷

In the Mid-Atlantic, the British were just as successful in limiting American commerce as they proved in New England. After routing General Washington's

¹⁷ Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974), 345, 451-52, and Richard Buel, *In Irons: Britain's Naval Supremacy and the American Revolutionary Economy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 113-19, 153-54. Copper bottoms made warships faster, more maneuverable, and reduced damage to the hull from barnacles. The Royal Navy started coppering its ships in 1778, and most of the fleet had copper bottoms by 1782. See William Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail: The American Navy during the Revolution* (New York: Scribners, 1976), 253-54.

Continental Army in several engagements around New York in summer 1776, General Sir William Howe occupied the city, and the British maintained a military stranglehold over New York for the rest of the war. Although the British did not destroy the city, the effect was just as complete on American commerce as if they had. The British also threatened Philadelphia. By December 1776, General Lord Cornwallis's vanguard had forced the disintegrating Continental Army's retreat south from New York through New Jersey and across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. At that point it appeared likely that the British would occupy Philadelphia, and thus most of the city's merchants withdrew to the countryside. Their departure crippled Philadelphia's commerce, which was shut down completely the following year when the British finally occupied the city. For much of the remainder of the war, the Royal Navy maintained a stiff naval presence off the Delaware Capes, frustrating the city's commerce for the rest of the war.¹⁸

Further south, the British frustration of American commerce was also effective. On January 1, 1776, several months prior to Congress's declaration, Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, ordered Norfolk burned the city to the ground. American Colonels William Woodford and Robert Howe actually had no objection to the British burning Norfolk, having already proposed the action to the Committee of Safety to render the port useless to the Royal Navy. Thus when Dunmore set fire to the town, the American commanders took no action to stop it. The town was not rebuilt during the

¹⁸ Richard Buel argued that the British threat in 1776 and occupation of 1777-78 certainly impaired Philadelphia's commerce, but the British never succeeded in closing the port completely. The city experienced a brief revival in trade in 1780-81 before the blockade of 1782 dealt a second crippling blow to the city's commerce. See Buel, *In Irons*, 137-43, 173-85, 217-22.

war, thus destroying Baltimore's chief rival in the grain trade in the Chesapeake Bay.¹⁹ Charleston escaped the fires that engulfed Norfolk, and even withstood the initial British siege of June 1776. When the British invaded the deep South in 1779, however, Savannah quickly fell, followed by Charleston the next year. Both cities were occupied by the British for the remainder of the war.

Baltimore alone escaped the British. Johann David Schoepf believed that the city's good fortune was largely due to the natural advantages Baltimore possessed, including "the situation of the harbor," which "assured it against the sudden attacks of hostile craft; larger ships could not approach without circumspection and danger, and smaller craft dared not venture alone as far as the end of so spacious a bay." Yet a more fundamental and more important reason was at the root of the city's good fortune. To the British, Baltimore was just another place on the map bearing a name with no particular significance. Indeed, the Royal Navy never considered staging any significant military actions in the upper Chesapeake Bay. In 1774, Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, Thomas Graves's uncle, estimated that he could successfully blockade the American coast with as few as fifty ships, but his fleet in the Western Atlantic only numbered twenty-five ships. He therefore decided to concentrate his naval power in the North, leaving the Chesapeake Bay and the Carolinas largely free of British warships in 1775. Throughout the year, Graves came under significant criticism from other British commanders and the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, for not doing more. Without an adequate fleet there was little more that Graves could have done, but he was nonetheless relieved of

¹⁹ Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 81-84, 205-06.

command at the end of 1775.²⁰

After Graves's departure, the British fleet in the Western Atlantic was finally reinforced and numbered fifty ships. Yet demands on warships to convoy British merchant vessels as well as transport the army for the campaigns against Charleston, New York, and Newport in 1776 continued to sap the fleet's ability to effectively blockade American ports, particularly those in the Chesapeake. Baltimore was briefly threatened only once in 1776, when the British sloop-of-war *Otter* sailed into the upper Bay in March. George Woolsey believed that after Lord Dunmore's burning of Norfolk, Baltimore would be next. The cruise of the *Otter* appeared to be the prelude to such an attack, but the newly refitted *Defence* turned back the British cruiser, ending the threat. Tory activity, which was largely concentrated on the Eastern Shore, was suppressed in summer 1776, and then crushed in early 1777. Although isolated Tory parties continued to raid storehouses, the remaining Loyalists scattered to the wetlands or the islands in the Bay, or fled Maryland altogether.²¹

The clearest example of the British lack of interest in the port occurred during General Howe's 1777 campaign against Philadelphia. Instead of ferrying the British army from New York through the Delaware Capes and then up the Delaware Bay,

²⁰ Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, I; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 22-27, 37-39, and Buel, *In Irons*, 37-43, 287-88 n.25. Thomas Graves, Vice Admiral Samuel Graves's nephew, rose quickly through the ranks of the Royal Navy during the Revolution. He was a lieutenant commanding the schooner *Diana* under his uncle's command in 1775, and was promoted first to captain and then to the admiralty within five years.

²¹ For Woolsey's reaction to the destruction of Norfolk, see George Woolsey to George Salmon, January 26, 1776, Woolsey and Salmon Letterbook, Library of Congress. For the engagement between the *Otter* and the *Defence*, see Smith and Earle, "The Maryland State Navy," 216-23. For Tory activities in the Chesapeake Bay, see Edwin Jameson, "Tory Operations on the Bay," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 378-88.

Admiral Richard Lord Howe, the general's brother, transported the British army from New York to the Virginia Capes, and then up the Chesapeake Bay to the Head of the Elk River in northern Maryland. The fleet, which numbered more than two-hundred vessels, entered the Bay on August 14, 1777. A week later, William Lux and Captain James Nicholson could see the fleet from the steeple of the Baltimore Court House. Panic engulfed the city as many believed the Howe brothers intended to seize or burn Baltimore. Such an effort could have been rather easily accomplished, because the only resistance Baltimore could have mustered were two under-manned galleys of the Maryland State Navy. Instead, the British sailed by without detaching a single vessel; Baltimore was simply unworthy of attention of any kind from His Majesty's military forces.²²

In the absence of any direct military threat from the British, Baltimore's merchants were free to take advantage of their commercial edge. Many of the city's merchants acted as agents for a range of political authorities. As early as the fall of 1775, the Council of Safety authorized merchants Samuel Purviance, William Smith, and David Stewart to act as agents for the state and procure arms from Bermuda in exchange for Maryland produce. John Smith and Samuel Purviance served as agents for Congress, Jesse Hollinsworth served as an agent for Maryland, William Lux and Daniel Bowly served as agents for Virginia, and William Smith served as an agent for the French Royal Marine. The most lucrative posts were often those overseas, and this was especially true for Abraham Van Bibber, who served as Maryland's agent on the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, and Richard Harrison, Maryland's agent on the French island of Martinique.

²² Myron Smith and John Earle, "The Maryland State Navy," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 229-30.

Van Bibber encouraged Baltimore merchants to focus their trade on St. Eustatius, and by early 1776, Baltimore merchants John Smith, William Neill, William Spear, William Lux, and Daniel Bowly were all exporting commodities to the West Indies in exchange for arms. Until its capture by the British in February 1781, St. Eustatius acted like an off-shore entrepot for war supplies from Europe to America.²³

Thanks to the wartime surge in prices on American produce, the profits from the trade with St. Eustatius were enormous. Tobacco selling at 20 livres per quintal in 1774, the equivalent of 15s/Ct (shillings per hundredweight), reached 125-150 livres per quintal by 1776, or the equivalent of 95-115s/Ct.²⁴ With prices on American leaf rocketing upward, the French tobacco monopoly, or Farmers General, scurried to find alternative sources of supply. The monopoly considered building up a domestic tobacco supply in France, or importing new supplies from Cayenne, French Guiana, or Corsica. When these efforts proved fruitless, the Farmers General decided to purchase tobacco from the Spanish monopoly. Spain had opened Louisiana to speculation, and was eager for French

²³ Paul Kent Walker, "The Baltimore Community and the American Revolution: A Study in Urban Development, 1763-1783" (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1973), 199-200; J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," in *The American Revolution and the West Indies*, ed. Charles Toth (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 86-100; Ernest Eller, "Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 32; Todd Cooper, "Trial and Triumph: The Impact of the Revolutionary War on the Baltimore Merchants," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 290-92.

²⁴ Jacob Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), II, 720-21. A quintal refers to 100 French pounds and a hundredweight refers to 100 English pounds. The English and French measured a pound differently, however, and thus a price per quintal needs to be discounted by 8 percent when converting to a price per hundredweight. The currency also needs to be converted. In 1783, 24 French livres could be exchanged for £1 Sterling, thus one French livre was worth approximately 10 pence, or 0.83 English shillings. Therefore a multiplier of 0.764 (0.92 x 0.83) should be used to convert tobacco prices in the 1780s from livres per quintal into shillings per hundredweight (s/Ct). To convert from s/Ct to livres per quintal, a multiplier of 1.309 (1 / 0.764) should be used. See Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 753.

investment there, but the Farmers General was only interested in Cuban or Venezuelan leaf. The Spanish agreed to sell the French one million pounds of the latter in Seville in 1777, but when the Spanish raised their prices in 1778, the French ended the deal. Thereafter, the Farmers General leaned heavily on tobacco growers in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Prussia, Hungary, the United Provinces, the Austrian Netherlands, and Flanders to supply the French market. Tobacco production in these areas multiplied several times over during the war. Russian and Ukrainian tobacco exports to western Europe increased from 11,610 pounds in 1775 to more than 6 million pounds in 1777. However, French consumers balked at the use of non-American tobacco in the manufacture of snuff, and were especially critical about the quality of Eastern European leaf. Consumers proved willing to pay the higher prices for Maryland and Virginia leaf, and thus tobacco exports from the Chesapeake Bay continued even though the *average* wartime price was 50 livres per quintal—more than double its prewar levels.²⁵ A similar inflation effected flour and wheat prices, and Baltimore's merchants were able to reap the benefits of windfall profits from the wartime inflation.

Despite the city's good fortune, the full potential of the Baltimore market was not realized early in the war. Until 1778, Caron de Beaumarchais, the famed French author of *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, supplied the Americans with military equipment subsidized by the French government. The primary destination for

²⁵ The Farmers General paid 78,140,000 livres for tobacco purchases totaling just more than 157 million pounds between 1777 and 1782. Thus the Farmers General's average wartime price was 50 livres per quintal. In Amsterdam, prices on Virginia tobacco increased steadily throughout the war, and were 336 percent higher in 1782 compared to 1774. On the other hand, the price of Dutch tobacco at Amsterdam increased 250 percent between 1774 and 1778, then declined 55 percent between 1778 and 1783 to near its 1774 level. See Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 717-27, 852.

Beaumarchais's ships was Portsmouth, New Hampshire to supply the Continental Army in the North. However, New England did not offer any commodities of interest for the European market, so French captains typically sailed for Charleston in hopes of taking on tobacco or flour—the only two American commodities in demand in Europe.

Unfortunately, Charleston infrequently had either commodity, being at the heart of the rice and indigo-growing regions of the colonies rather than the wheat and tobacco regions. Beaumarchais overlooked the possibilities of a direct trade with Baltimore, and thus his captains usually returned to France with empty hulls. If the French ships had entered at Baltimore instead of Charleston, they could have easily procured flour and tobacco. Baltimore was ignored as a possible destination for the same reasons that the British did not bother occupying the city: it was a name on a map devoid of recognition as a leading American entrepot. The oversight proved costly for Beaumarchais.

Although the French crown funneled nearly 3 million livres to his fictitious firm, Rodrigue Hortalez & Company, his liabilities soared passed 10 million livres because his captains failed to secure a return trade from the United States.²⁶

Beaumarchais had little to fear from the Royal Navy in the Chesapeake Bay, so his failure to trade in Baltimore can not be blamed on the fear of British resistance. The Royal Navy's blockade of the Chesapeake Bay in 1777 never involved more than a few frigates. The British initially deployed the 50-gun ship *Preston* and the 20-gun sloop-of-

²⁶ Georges Lemaitre, *Beaumarchais* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1949), 220, and Frédéric Grendel, *Beaumarchais: The Man Who Was Figaro*, trans. Roger Greaves (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977), 175, 190-92. The French crown's connection to Beaumarchais had to be covert because France was not yet at war with Great Britain in 1776-1777. For French aid to America prior to the alliance of 1778, see Claude Van Tyne, "French Aid Before the Alliance of 1778," *American Historical Review*, 31 (1925): 34-40; Gaston Martin, "Commercial Relations between Nantes and the American Colonies during the War of Independence," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, 4 (1932): 812-29; and Thomas Abernathy, "Commercial Activities of Silas

war *Brune* off the Virginia Capes in January, but these ships were relieved by the frigates *Phoenix* and *Emerald* the following month. Additional warships joined the squadron in August, but Admiral Howe had to withdraw most of them in September to maintain supply lines through the Delaware Bay to British-occupied Philadelphia. Beaumarchais's vessels, most of which were heavily armed, could have easily matched the British warships. The *Fier Roderique*, a converted East Indiaman, carried 54 guns. The *Beaumont*, which was designed as a 64-gun ship-of-the-line, carried 40 guns.²⁷

As the war progressed, the Royal Navy's grip over the Chesapeake Bay gradually tightened. In 1778, several ships-of-the-line joining the frigates normally patrolling the Virginia Capes, and on May 8, 1779, the blockade became nearly impassable with the arrival of Commodore Sir George Collier's flotilla of 28 warships led by the 64-gun *Raisable*.²⁸ Yet Baltimore itself was never directly blockaded, and the city's merchants discovered ways to circumvent the British naval presence off Hampton Roads. From the Patapsco, produce could be ferried in shallops across the Bay to Tangier or Pocomoke Sounds. Because the Eastern Shore was largely cleared of Tory agitation by 1777, the produce could then be safely carted across the peninsula to a number of small inlets in either Chincoteague or Sinepuxent Bay. Produce could then be loaded onto vessels anchored off Assateague Island, and war supplies off-loaded to be carted back across the peninsula and then ferried across the Chesapeake Bay to Baltimore. George Woolsey employed the strategy as early as 1776 to minimize the risk of the British

Deane in France," *American Historical Review*, 39 (1934): 477-85.

²⁷ Eller, "Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 30-31, and Buel, *In Irons*, 54, 295-96 n.4.

²⁸ Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 204.

seizing his goods, but the practice became widespread after 1778 as the chances of running the British blockade diminished. The strategy was much more expensive than having an ocean-going vessel clear the Virginia Capes, but it proved highly effective in evading the Royal Navy's blockade. When Tory agitation swelled up again in 1780, Tangier and Pocomoke Sounds became primary theatres of operation for Tory privateers and the barges of the Maryland and Virginia navies that opposed them.²⁹

The surge in Baltimore's flour trade had mixed results in wartime procurement for the army. The trade through St. Eustatius was a vital link in keeping the Continental Army supplied with arms, but the export of wheat and flour to pay for those war supplies contributed to severe shortages in the supply of food to the army. Another problem with procurement was that so many farmers were enlisted in the militia and the army that the supply of grain was lower than it would have been in peacetime. General Henry Knox estimated that mobilization likely reduced the normal farm surplus by at least 50 percent, and in some years wiped it out completely. Others in the army were not convinced. General Horatio Gates wrote to Washington in 1779 that "I cannot persuade myself there has been any Natural Scarcity." Rather, "Avarice and Monopoly, must have caused the emptiness of our Magazines of Bread." To address this problem, Congress determined to ban the export of wheat, flour, and bread in 1778 to insure an adequate domestic supply. When the ban took effect, however, farmers began forestalling their crops to wait for

²⁹ The action between Tory privateers and the Maryland barges culminated in November 1782 in the Battle of Cager's Strait, or the "Battle of the Barges," the bloodiest naval engagement of the war in the Chesapeake Bay. See Smith and Earle, "The Maryland State Navy," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 234-46, and Jameson, "Tory Operations," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, 378-402.

better prices, and thus the supply of food to the army failed to improve.³⁰

After the Treaty of Alliance with France was signed in 1778, procurement problems for the Continental Army worsened further. When French forces began arriving in America, beginning with the Comte D'Estaing's fleet in summer 1778, they too needed provisions and looked to their American allies to provide them. Unlike agents for the Continental Congress, who offered depreciated Continental Dollars as payment for goods, or agents for Maryland, who offered depreciated state currency, William Smith could offer French bills of exchange and specie as an agent for the French Royal Marine. Thus James Calhoun as an agent for Maryland found it nearly impossible to fulfill his quotas for grain, while Smith proved so successful that the state's commissioners accused him of hoarding. They temporarily seized 5,000 bushels of wheat, and several thousand barrels of flour from Smith's Baltimore warehouses. The Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary to the United States, complained to Congress about Maryland's actions. Although Congress had no power to compel a state government, the Maryland authorities were urged to reconsider their actions, and Smith's produce on consignment to the French was subsequently returned to him. Despite some minor ripples, the French connection proved enormously profitable for Baltimore, siphoning more specie into the city than had been in circulation at any point during the colonial period. When the Maryland Assembly asked the city's merchants for £200,000 Sterling in May 1780 to send Maryland troops south for the Yorktown campaign, Baltimore raised £100,845

³⁰ Buel, *In Irons*, 5-25, 47-52, 113. Harold Pinkett is somewhat more forgiving of Baltimore's role in supplying the army and the republic with food, but his evidence supports Buel's more subdued conclusions regarding the city's role. See Harold Pinkett, "Maryland as a Source of Food Supplies During the American Revolution," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 46 (1951): 157-72. Horatio Gates quoted in Buel, *In Irons*, 7.

immediately, with a promise for another £30,000-£40,000 to follow in a few days.³¹

The substantial British military activities in the Chesapeake in late 1780 and 1781 leading up to the climactic battle at Yorktown created temporary problems for Baltimore, but the allied victory over Lord Cornwallis's army in October ultimately made the presence of foreign armies in the Chesapeake just as profitable to Baltimore's economy as the procurement trade. French General François Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux, estimated that by 1782, wartime spending by British troops had placed more than £10 million Sterling into circulation in the United States, and that spending by French troops added another 35 million livres, or the equivalent of nearly £1½ million Sterling to the total. These totals did not include spending by the two nation's fleets. Even though much of the spending occurred outside Baltimore, the city's merchants were often the ultimate beneficiaries of the inflow of foreign specie. As Richard Buel pointed out, "the absence of an indigenous mercantile elite" in Virginia meant "that French money distributed in Virginia flowed to Baltimore and Philadelphia, having only a slight effect on the Virginia economy."³²

Much of French spending did occur in Baltimore, the point of embarkment in September 1781 for the more than 5,000 French troops under General Comte de Rochambeau destined for the battlefield at Yorktown. After helping to defeat the British army under General Lord Cornwallis, the French army returned to Baltimore in July 1782 and spent several weeks in the city. Most of the regiments marched north in late August,

³¹ Pinkett, "Maryland as a Source of Food Supplies," 157-72; Buel, *In Irons*, 159-63; and Walker, "The Baltimore Community," 275-81, 287-89.

³² Buel, *In Irons*, 210, and François Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780-1871-1782*, trans. Howard Rice (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), II, 572.

but 500 troops under the command of Brigadier General Chevalier de La Valette remained in Baltimore for the duration of the war. Rochambeau also left a small squadron of French warships at Baltimore under Admiral Chevalier de la Villebrune, making the city a base of operations for the French fleet in North America as well as the chief port of entry for French trade between 1781 and 1783. The French presence boosted the city's economy by saturating it even further with specie, and when the French finally left Baltimore at the end of the war, the city's merchants were sorry to see them go.³³

In Baltimore, the sense of optimism at the end of the war was palpable. Thanks to the city's wartime trade, Baltimore was thus uniquely positioned to take advantage of the pending transformation of the Atlantic economy, and merchants on both sides of the Atlantic knew it. Beginning in early 1783, dozens of merchants descended upon Baltimore to seek their fortunes. In the late summer or early fall, Henry Johnson arrived from Massachusetts to establish a branch of his Boston firm, Johnson, Johonnot & Company.³⁴ Johnson hoped to position the firm to better take advantage of Baltimore's proximity to the West Indies, where a free trade with the Dutch, Danish, Spanish and French possessions promised to greatly expand the already profitable connections with the British colonies in the Caribbean. To James Demie in Cape François, Santo Domingo, Johnson wrote that "I am confident Balt[imore] will have its share of your

³³ J. Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore: Being a Complete History of "Baltimore Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1874), 195-96, 199-203, 206-07.

³⁴ The firm's three members included George and Francis (Frank) Johonnot, who were brothers, and Henry Johnson, their half-brother. They were likely third generation descendants of Huguenot merchants. See Rhoda Dorsey, "The Conduct of Business in Baltimore, 1783-1785: as seen in the Letterbook of Johnson, Johonnot, & Co.," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 55 (1960): 230.

trade as we are growing very fast here.”³⁵

Baltimore’s prospects even attracted merchants from Europe. Robert Oliver was among them. Without any capital though filled with boundless energy and ambition, Oliver arrived from Belfast, Ireland aboard the brig *Friendship* in May 1783. Likely encouraged by Irish merchants to migrate to Maryland’s growing port, he established a partnership with a Baltimore merchant named Simm, and the new firm quickly set about selling the cargo of dry goods and provisions from the *Friendship*.³⁶ From Germany came John Jacob Astor. Just past his twentieth birthday, Astor sailed for Baltimore in summer 1783 carrying a few hundred dollars worth of musical instruments that he planned to sell on commission.³⁷

Even men who had never engaged in commerce felt the pull of the entrepreneurial excitement in America’s fastest growing city. Among those so enthralled was Joshua Barney, a young naval commander who captured the British sloop-of-war *General Monk* in 1782. Although it was this victory which placed Barney on the road to his fortune, he had already earned fame before the celebrated engagement in the Delaware Bay.

³⁵ Henry Johnson to James Demie, November 8, 1783, in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MS.498, MHS.

³⁶ The exact date of Robert Oliver’s arrival in Baltimore is unknown, thus it is not entirely certain he arrived aboard the *Friendship*. Yet Stuart Bruchey has demonstrated based on the evidence surrounding Oliver’s arrival in Baltimore that this interpretation must be the correct one. See Stuart Bruchey, *Robert Oliver, Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 52-54, esp. 53 n.8.

³⁷ Scharf lists 17 American merchants (including Henry Johnson) and 33 European merchants (including Robert Oliver) who established houses in Baltimore at the conclusion of the war. See Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 209. Astor does not appear on Scharf’s list because he did not establish a house in Baltimore. On the advice of a fellow passenger aboard the ship to America, Astor quickly relocated to New York where he exchanged his musical instruments for furs. He subsequently settled in New York rather than Baltimore. At the time of his death, Astor’s fortune, which surpassed \$20 million, was the largest in America. See Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 221-22.

Commissioned as a lieutenant in the Continental Navy before his seventeenth birthday, he escaped from the notorious Old Mill Prison in Plymouth, England after being taken prisoner by the British. Four days after his much-publicized return to America, the Pennsylvania Navy offered him command of the *Hyder-Ally*. Barney accepted, and barely a month later, captured the *General Monk*. Awarded command of his prize, now refitted and renamed the *General Washington*, Barney soon captured the sloops *Sally* and *Boreas*, and the schooner *Happy Return*. At the end of the war, he used the money from these prizes to underwrite a business partnership with his brother-in-law, John Stricker. Together they cultivated business connections in Havana and Hispaniola, as well as Spain, France, England, and the Netherlands.³⁸

Perhaps the clearest sign of Baltimore's increasing prominence was the interest shown in the port by Robert Morris, whose business savvy Congress had relied on to finance much of the Revolutionary War effort. Like so many others, Morris formed a partnership in the wake of the war with a Baltimore merchant—in this case Tench Tilghman, a former Colonel of the Maryland Line who served as an Aide-de-Camp to General George Washington. The articles of incorporation between Tilghman and Morris for the new firm, Tench Tilghman and Company, took effect January 1, 1784, but the two merchants had been transacting business months before the official date. Tilghman soon won over his Philadelphia partner's complete trust. In April, Morris wrote to Tilghman that "I shall relax entirely the Article [of incorporation] requiring consultation whenever you think proper. You have my entire confidence, use your own discretion and good

³⁸ Louis Arthur Norton, *Joshua Barney: Hero of the Revolution and 1812* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 54-101, and Hulbert Footner, *Sailor of Fortune: Life and Adventures of Commodore Barney U.S.N.* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998; orig. 1940), 102-16.

Sense.” A grandiose speculator in his own right, Morris was likely attracted to the extraordinary ambition exemplified by the scope of Tilghman’s correspondence in late 1783 and early 1784. The Baltimore merchant clearly hoped to do business with almost every part of European continent, sending a flurry of letters to merchants in an enormous crest of cities that stretched from Hamburg on the North Sea to Lisbon on the Atlantic, around Gibraltar to Genoa on the Mediterranean.³⁹ Tilghman’s correspondence, and that of the dozens of other merchants who descended on the city in 1783, announced to the world that Baltimore was to be a center of the Atlantic world’s pending transformation.

POSTWAR OPTIMISM AND FRUSTRATION

With news of the peace treaty believed imminent in early 1783, attention on both sides of the Atlantic turned, once again, to a consideration of the new republic’s commercial prospects. Few wished a return to the nationalist policies that the Congress had embraced in 1775. Robert Morris had fought hard during the waning years of the war for a nationalist agenda of currency reform and economic interdependence, but he keenly desired retirement from public life in 1783. James Madison, another nationalist who ultimately served as one of the chief architects of the Federal Constitution, retired from the Continental Congress in 1783, and returned to Virginia to serve in the state’s

³⁹ Robert Morris to Tench Tilghman, April 10, 1784, in *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, ed. Elizabeth Nuxoll and Mary Gallagher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995-1999), IX, 247. For Morris’s official announcement of the new firm, see Robert Morris to Jonathan Williams, Jr., January 1, 1784, in *The Papers of Robert Morris*, IX, 3. For transactions between Morris and Tilghman prior to January 1, 1784, see *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 797 n.1, 888. The ports that most interested Tilghman included the German port of Hamburg on the North Sea, London, Falmouth, Bristol, and Liverpool in England, Cork in Ireland, Nantes, Bordeaux, and Bayonne on France’s Atlantic coast, Coruna on the northwest Atlantic coast of Spain, Cadiz on the southwest Atlantic coast of Spain, Lisbon, Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean ports of Barcelona, Marseilles, and Genoa. See Tench Tilghman Papers, MS.1445, MHS. For Tilghman’s background, see Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 244.

assembly. The making of a national domestic economy was therefore postponed, as Americans considered how the new republic would maintain its economic independence, and how the political independence of the United States would change the patterns of commerce in the Atlantic economy. What place would there be for the trade of an independent republic in an imperial world? In America, the answers to both questions were simple and linked: from Savannah to the Kennebec River, Americans wanted full, fair, and free trade with every nation.⁴⁰

The basic principles of free trade had guided the Congress since April 1776, when the delegates agreed to open American ports to the commerce of every nation except Great Britain. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the leaders of the world's foremost mercantilist powers also lent their support to free trade in the wake of America's victory over the Britain. In France, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, who served as both Foreign Minister and Principal Minister to King Louis XVI, desired to keep French ports open to American ships after the war. Vergennes was not really an ideological proponent of free trade like Quesnay and the *physiocrats*. A perspicacious career diplomat, Vergennes was instead determined to preserve and extend the close relationship he helped forge with the United States during the war. He also hoped that an extensive postwar trade with the United States might ease the enormous burdens on the French treasury. By 1781, France faced deficits of more than 150 million livres per year even

⁴⁰ For the abortive efforts of nationalists at the end of the war, see Lance Banning, "James Madison and the Nationalists, 1780-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 40 (1983): 227-55; Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse*, 109-78; and Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics*, 297-330. For Madison's return to the Virginia House of Delegates, and his new focus on state-oriented solutions to economic problems, see Drew McCoy, "The Port Bill of 1784," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 83 (1975): 288-303, and Richard Chew, "A New Hope for the Republic" (M.A., The College of William and Mary, 1992).

though half the French royal budget was marked for interest payments on the national debt. Vergennes believed, as did others, that the liberalization of French trade policies with the United States would expand the French government's revenues from commerce, and in turn, help relieve the increasingly perilous fiscal predicament.⁴¹

In Britain, an unimpeded trade with America was also a preeminent concern of the new prime minister, William Petty Fitzmaurice, Earl of Shelburne. Given the new political context, no one in Britain could be entirely certain whether or not the Americans would welcome British trade. For Shelburne, a liberalization of mercantilist policies provided the means to insure the American trade. Unlike Vergennes, Shelburne was also ideologically predisposed to free trade. On February 17, 1783, he proclaimed to Parliament that "situated as we [Britain] are between the old world and the new, and between the southern and northern Europe, all that we ought to covet upon the earth is free trade." To further this aim, Shelburne's ministry promoted the American Intercourse Act, which would have provided the United States with the same trade privileges that existed for the American colonies prior to the war.⁴²

⁴¹ On Quesnay and the French *physiocrats*, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976). Vergennes had served as France's Foreign Minister since 1774, becoming the Principal Minister to King Louis XVI after Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Comte de Maurepas, died in 1781. Thereafter, Vergennes was in a position to exert enormous influence over a bewildering array of affairs, including France's national debt. See Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 16-23, 237-48; Jacob Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 740; Jonathan Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 38-39; Gregg Lint, "Preparing for Peace: The Objectives of the United States, France, and Spain in the War of the American Revolution," in *Peace and the Peacemakers*, 35-38; and Jonathan Dull, "Vergennes, Rayvenal, and the Diplomacy of Trust," in *Peace and the Peacemakers*, 110-12.

⁴² *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England: From the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the Year 1803* (London: T.C. Hansard, 1806-1820), XXIII, cols. 409-410. Shelburne hoped that the American Intercourse Bill would lay the groundwork for long-term economic cooperation between the United States and Great Britain, and eventually lead to political reunification

With both the French and the British seemingly ready to embrace the ideal of free trade, merchants from Boston to Savannah were supremely confident that new avenues of commerce would soon open throughout the Caribbean, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. Extricated from the web of mercantile restraints, colonial patterns of trade would be left behind. No longer would Britain alone act as the entrepot for American goods in Europe, and correspondence from Europe strengthened this view. From Nantes, the locus for so much of the American trade with France during the war, Mark Lynch assured James Madison that “every article necessary in America, can be procured and shipped . . . on reasonable terms, which I dare say you will experience hereafter.” Bolstered by such bold declarations, Madison confidently reported to Congress prior to his departure for Virginia, that taxes on imports would aptly serve for “paying the debts of the Revolution,” because “an unbounded freedom has accrued to commerce.”⁴³ From the vantage of either the nation’s wharves or the halls of Congress, the republic’s commercial horizons seemed unlimited.

The rising tide of support for free trade generated increasing uneasiness for British merchants. A particular fear was that British efforts to regain their prewar

between the British and the newly independent Americans. See Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 236; Charles Ritcheson, *The Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 5-19; Charles Ritcheson, “The Earl of Shelburne and Peace with America, 1782-1783: Vision and Reality,” *International History Review*, 5 (1983): 322-45; and Esmond Wright, “British Objectives, 1780-83: ‘If Not Dominion Then Trade’,” in *Peace and the Peacemakers*, 18, 22, 27-28.

⁴³ Mark Lynch to James Madison, February 15, 1783, and “Report on Address to the States by Congress,” April 26, 1783, in *The Papers of James Madison*, ed. William Hutchinson and William Rachal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962-), VI, 243, 489. Mark Lynch was a merchant with close ties to Philip Mazzei, Virginia’s wartime agent in Tuscany. The committee on which Madison served also included Alexander Hamilton and Oliver Ellsworth. Congress appointed them to deliver an address to the states concerning the recent adoption of a plan to restore public credit.

domination over the Chesapeake trade could be thwarted by the French. Planters in Maryland and Virginia owed enormous prewar debts to British merchants, and Shelburne's ministry sought to insure repayment in the preliminary peace agreement. Article IV stated that "Creditors on either side, shall meet with no lawful Impediment to the Recovery of the full value in Sterling Money of all bonâ fide Debts heretofore contracted."⁴⁴ Yet if Marylanders and Virginians chose to bypass the British trade in favor of selling tobacco and other staples directly to the French, the mechanism for repayment would have been lost. Without the American trade, it would have been nearly impossible for the British to collect on the prewar debts. Recapturing the commerce of their former colonies was therefore a paramount concern, and to encourage its renewal in Spring 1783, many British firms began offering Americans deep discounts up to 25 percent below London prices on manufactured goods, as well as six-month's credit to pay for them.⁴⁵ The campaign to win back the Americans to the commercial nexus of the British Empire had begun.

It soon became very clear that the British merchants had nothing to fear. By the end of the war, Americans were flush with specie and had a burning desire to spend it on British goods. In Charleston, John Banks, a Virginia merchant contracted to buy provisions for General Nathanael Greene's army, purchased large quantities of British goods prior to the British evacuation. In Virginia, John Randolph complained that "several British vessels have arrived in our rivers: some of which affect to entitle

⁴⁴ "Preliminary Terms of the Peace between Britain and The United States, November 30, 1782," Article IV, in Dull, *A Diplomatic History*, 172.

⁴⁵ Louis Maganzin, "Economic Depression in Maryland and Virginia, 1783-1787" (Ph.D., Georgetown University, 1967), 19-22.

themselves to an entry by distress.” Once the formal peace arrived, however, the rage for imports swelled into a torrent of spending. Never before during the colonial period had so much specie been in circulation, and in conjunction with deep discounts and liberal credit terms offered by the British merchants, the availability of money touched off a frenzy of speculative spending that quickly spread throughout America. Between 1783 and 1785, Americans imported almost £7 million Sterling in goods from Britain, of which nearly £2 million Sterling went to Maryland and Virginia.⁴⁶ Although it is not known what percentage of imports went directly to the port of Baltimore, the city undoubtedly received a considerable portion of this trade. Ships jammed the city’s waterfront by summer 1783, and the massive number of seamen crowding the wharves caught the attention of Johann Schoepf. He claimed that on an autumn day in 1783, fifty ships thronged the wharves at Fells Point, creating a forest of masts where pennants fluttered in the breeze like leaves on so many trees. Henry Johnson reported that as many as seventy ships and smaller vessels crowded into the port on one day the following Spring.⁴⁷

In Baltimore, the city’s shopkeepers and merchants were caught up in the

⁴⁶ American exports during the same period amounted to just over £1.8 million Sterling, of which £800,000 Sterling came from Maryland and Virginia, thus leaving staggering trade deficits for both the Chesapeake as a region and the nation as a whole. See U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), II, 1176. A 1786 British report made by William Eden, a member of Parliament, estimated that between Christmas 1783 and Christmas 1784, British imports to America amounted to £4,281,174 Sterling, of which £2,009,782 Sterling went to Virginia and Maryland. Eden estimated British exports for the same period at £677,368 Sterling, of which £352,792 Sterling went to Maryland and Virginia. See Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, Appendix D, 368.

⁴⁷ Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784*, I, 328; Henry Johnson to Stephen Higginson, March 25, 1784, in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MHS; *The Papers of James Madison*, V, 287 n.19 and VI, 46 n.11; and Edmund Randolph to James Madison, May 9, 1783, in *The Papers of James Madison*, VII, 33.

delirium as well. During the last six months of 1783, the firm of Woolsey and Salmon ordered more than £2,000 in linens from the British firm of Cunningham and Campbell, a variety of manufactures from their English supplier, George Moore, as well as silks, satins and other luxury items from numerous French merchants—yet they still complained that they could not get enough merchandise to satisfy demand. Brigadier-General Mordecai Gist, who commanded the second division of the Maryland Line at the Battle of Yorktown, returned to his mercantile pursuits after the war. Throughout 1784, he steadily imported every variety of luxury goods, including velvets, silver utensils, silk cloth, and china.⁴⁸ Christian Keener, who took over his father's mercantile business at the end of the war, also participated in the speculation. In 1785, he increased his commodity purchases by 300 percent over their total the previous year, with flour purchases alone amounting to at least £1,374 over two years.⁴⁹

The speculative fervor was so intense that despite the availability of specie and deep discounts, many Baltimore firms still went into debt to pay for the torrent of manufactures streaming into the port. A foreign observer noted that the flush of prosperity generated by the postwar speculation would not last, and that the mounting debts would doom the city and the state to ruin unless new sources of gold and silver

⁴⁸ Woolsey and Salmon to Waddel Cunningham and Campbell, September 30, 1783, Woolsey and Salmon to George Moore, September 30, 1783, and Woolsey and Salmon to Gauge and Dupree, October 20, 1783, in Woolsey and Salmon Letterbook, 1774-1784, Library of Congress: quoted in Maganzin, "Economic Depression," 20, 22, 28-29. For Gist's role in the Revolution, see Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 214-16, 219-21, and for his business activities after the war see Maganzin, "Economic Depression in Maryland and Virginia," 30.

⁴⁹ Keener Account Book, MS.514, MHS. Exact figures for Keener's commodity purchases are impossible to calculate because only 201 of the 397 entries in the account book list both the type of good purchased and its value. The 201 entries for which type and value are known account for £4,776 Sterling in goods, and include seventeen transactions in 1784 for commodities worth £494, and twenty transactions in 1785 for commodities worth £1,647. Keener had six transactions in 1784 for flour worth £249, and seven transactions in 1785 for flour worth £1,125.

emerged. The Maryland Assembly agreed. As early as November 1783, legislators feared the consequences of “improvident citizens who too frequently indulge themselves in the pernicious practice of involving themselves in [further] debt.”⁵⁰

The Assembly had reason to be concerned about Marylanders’ indebtedness. Prewar debts to foreign merchants amounted to £1 million Maryland currency in 1783, and the debts contracted during the speculative period following the war had added another £667,000 to that total in just eighteen months. Marylanders also held domestic debts, especially for wartime confiscations of loyalist property, as well as tax in arrears owed to the state and private debts owed to other Americans. Together, these debts added another £1½ million to the total. In Baltimore, most of the domestic debt was held by merchants and lawyers. The Assembly had allowed purchasers of confiscated loyalist property to post bonds rather than pay in cash, and in Baltimore, twenty-four individuals, almost all of them merchants, posted bonds to purchase £36,673 in property confiscated from nine loyalists. All totaled, Marylanders’ total indebtedness likely surpassed £3 million Maryland currency by early 1784—or an average debt of more than £50 per family.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, II, 61, and *Votes and Proceedings of the Maryland Senate*, November Session, 1783, 16.

⁵¹ Exact figures for Marylanders’ indebtedness a year after the war are difficult to calculate. A report by the Maryland House of Delegates in January 1787 stated that Marylanders’ total indebtedness amounted to £2,489,586 Maryland currency. The exact figure for the value of confiscated loyalist estates was £650,991 19s 10½d. Of this £275,600 2s 1d remained unpaid, but nearly the full amount would have still been outstanding in 1784. The Report estimated that pre-war debts to British merchants equaled £1,000,000 Maryland currency, post-war debts added £666,667, and private debts added £350,000. Taxes in arrears amounted to £197,319 in 1787. This figure included post-1784 taxes in arrears but excluded pre-1784 taxes in arrears that had been paid off by 1787. Taxes in arrears in 1784 were therefore at least £200,000, and were likely much higher. Overall, Marylanders’ total indebtedness in 1784 was at least £2,866,667 Maryland currency, and almost certainly surpassed £3 million. See *General Assembly of the State of Maryland*, November Session 1786, House of Delegates, January 16, 1787, and Philip Crowl,

Despite the overwhelming debt burden, Baltimore's merchants were supremely confident that their debts, both new and old, would be quickly retired from the profits of a renewed commerce gained through free trade. Imports would be paid for by the republic's exports to all the world. Unfortunately these projections proved false when Great Britain and France did not adopt free trade measures. Although Shelburne and Vergennes initially demonstrated enthusiasm for free trade with America, the mercantile communities of both nations feared that the newly independent United States would soon engross the West Indies trade. Not surprisingly, both the French and British governments reversed course and designed mercantilist policies to frustrate American commercial traffic in favor of each nation's own merchants.

In March 1783, Parliament's debate over the American Intercourse Act finally began. Unfortunately for proponents of free trade, the bill's prospects of passing had largely vanished after Lord Shelburne's ministry collapsed on February 24. The new ruling coalition, an odd coupling of the staunchly conservative Lord North and the normally liberal Charles James Fox, opposed the measure. William Eden and John Baker Holroyd, Earl of Sheffield, carried the argument in the House of Commons for the new ministry. They condemned the act as a wholesale repeal of the Navigation Law and a threat to the supremacy of the British Empire. A much-publicized pamphlet written by Sheffield claimed that Canada could adequately provision the British West Indies, and that Britain would recapture 75 percent of the American trade without any special dispensations to the former colonies. Voices normally sympathetic to America and free trade remained largely silent during the debate and the measure was easily defeated. An

Maryland During and After the Revolution: A Political and Economic Study (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1943), 64-110.

alternative bill, which provided the King in Council with the power to arbitrarily set commercial policy regarding the United States, easily passed in its place. Subsequent Orders in Council of July 2, September 5, and December 26, 1783 excluded American ships from trading directly with the British West Indies; Americans could still transact business with Caribbean planters, but the trade itself, and thus the terms on which that trade was to be conducted, was reserved to British merchants and British ships alone.⁵²

In France, the struggle over trade policy began as early as January 1783 when the French government reverted back to their prewar trade policies, at least on a temporary basis. American flour could not enter France in American ships, American ships would not be admitted unless flying the French flag, and exports to America would be limited to molasses and rum. In the West Indies, only two ports, Port-de-Cârenage in St. Lucia and Môle Saint-Nicholas in Santo Domingo, would be open to American ships.⁵³ Yet on both sides of the Atlantic, supporters of free trade mobilized to fight for reform. Among the most important was the Chevalier d'Annemours, the French consul in Baltimore, who penned a fifteen-page treatise arguing that the reversion to France's prewar policies would harm both French and American interests. He urged the French government to instead open French ports to American ships. Vergennes was thoroughly impressed with the pamphlet and asked D'Annemours to prepare a further analysis on Maryland's

⁵² John Baker Holroyd, First Earl of Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies* (London, 1783). The lack of a concerted effort in support of the bill was mostly political, owing to the downfall of Shelburne's government and Fox's opposition to the measure. However, another important reason was that an enforceable commercial treaty with the United States appeared unlikely. The American Congress under the Articles of Confederation did not have the power to impose a binding treaty on all the states, and thus many members of Parliament worried that vital issues could not be adequately addressed in such a treaty. See Ritcheson, *The Aftermath of Revolution*, 5-19, 39-45.

⁵³ These stipulations were based on a French decree issued in 1767. See Frederick Nussbaum, "The French Colonial Arrêt of 1784," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 27 (1928): 63-64.

trade.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, Vergennes was also feeling intense political pressure from the agricultural interests in Bordeaux and much of the French mercantile community who wished that the mercantilist regime be perpetuated.

The Marquis de Lafayette understood Vergennes's dilemma, but found the situation very frustrating. Just after Christmas 1783, he complained to Robert Morris that "The Ideas Upon Commerce that Are Met With in this Country [France] are far from being always Right. To persuade people into their own interest is Sometimes as difficult a Matter as it Would be to obtain a Sacrifice." Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania was equally perplexed by French intransigence. In June 1784 he wrote to the now-Marquis de Chastellux that "English Commerce is strong enough to overthrow the Government; the Government of France can annihilate its Commerce . . . have the courage to give a liberal extension to your Commerce."⁵⁵

In America, merchants adjusted as best they could to the lags and delays in achieving the long-expected liberal policies regarding trade. Even when European decrees, proclamations and laws seemingly dashed the hopes for free trade, many remained optimistic that in the end, American aspirations would be fulfilled. From

⁵⁴ For d'Annemours's views, see Kathryn Sullivan, *Maryland and France, 1774-1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936), 137-43. For Vergennes's position, see Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de La Luzerne, February 15, 1784, in *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776-1790*, ed. Stanley Idzerda (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977-1983), V, 226. In America, the call for free trade was echoed by the Chevalier de La Luzerne. In France, the Marquis de Lafayette, and General Chevalier de Chastellux, and François Barbé-Marbois, the Consul General, joined the clarion pressing Vergennes to act. See *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 687-94. On the French reversion to prewar trade practices and the efforts for and against free trade, see *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 510-511, 681-87, and Nussbaum, "The French Colonial Arrêt of 1784," 62-68.

⁵⁵ Marquis de Lafayette to Robert Morris, December 26, 1783, in *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 843, and Gouverneur Morris to Marquis de Chastellux, June 17, 1784, in *The Papers of Robert Morris*, IX, 405.

Baltimore, Henry Johnson busily scribbled dozens of letters to his business contacts in the French West Indies trying to shore up his firm's interests by suggesting contingencies for the American trade. He assured James Demie, a merchant in Cape François, Santo Domingo, that "Should your port be shut against the Americans, you will have an opportunity of doing something clever here under the French flag." To Marie and Company in Port-au-Prince he wrote that "whether we [Americans] have permission to enter your port . . . seems doubtful," but "Should your trade be carried to the Mole of St. Nicholas . . . vessels under the French Flag will bring the produce of your Island to this Continent much easier than the Americans." Johnson remained hopeful, however, writing to his half-brother Francis Johonnot that "You know enough of Baltimore to see that every advantage ought to be taken that can be." Johnson even clung to the faint hope as late as February 1784, more than six months after the Orders in Council were issued, that he expected "to see a free trade to the English West Indies." Yet he did worry that without a free trade to the West Indies, "we shall not know what to do this year coming as our crops of wheat are like[ly] to be abundant."⁵⁶

Relief finally arrived in the form of two *Arrêts* issued by the French Council of State in May and August 1784, but the decrees greatly disappointed advocates for free trade. The French opened the ports of L'Orient, Bayonne, Dunkirk, and Marseilles to American ships, compelled the Farmers General to show preference for American tobacco, increased the number of free ports in the French West Indies from two to seven, established Isle de France [Mauritius] as an entrepot for American trade in the Far East,

⁵⁶ Henry Johnson to James Demie, November 8, 1783; Henry Johnson to Messrs. Marie & Co., November 8, 1783; Johnson, Johonnot & Co. [Henry Johnson] to Frank [Francis Johonnot], January 23, 1784; and Johnson, Johonnot & Co. [Henry Johnson] to Noah Parker, February 21, 1784, in Johnson, Johonnot and Company Letterbook, MHS.

and greatly expanded the list of items that might be imported or exported. However, the *arrêts* also limited American trade in the West Indies to timber, dye-woods, coal, livestock, salt beef, salt fish, rice, legumes, hides, and pitch. Wheat, flour, and corn were prohibited. The only exports allowed were rum and molasses; sugar and coffee were prohibited. Salt fish entering the French West Indies from America was taxed and rendered uncompetitive for the West Indies market, and worst of all, only ships of more than 60 tons were to be admitted to the free ports, which eliminated most of the sloops and schooners Americans employed for the West Indies trade.⁵⁷

For Baltimore, the terms of the commercial settlement were potentially catastrophic. France's exclusion of American flour exports to the French West Indies, coupled with Britain's restrictions on American trade with the British West Indies, threatened the profitability of the city's most important export. Prospects for tobacco were no better. Although the Farmers General were instructed to show preference for trading directly with American merchants, they continued to import most of the American crop through Britain, because Order in Council of December 26, 1783 allowed American tobacco destined for reexport to be admitted and warehoused in Great Britain duty free.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The seven West Indian ports included Port-du-Cârenage in St. Lucia, St. Pierre on Martinique, Pointe-à-Pitre on Guadeloupe, and Scarborough on Tobago. On Santo Domingo, Cape Môle St. Nicholas was closed, and Cape François, Port-au-Prince, and Aux Cayes were opened to American ships. By 1787, a series of further French actions eroded most of the concessions made in the *Arrêts* of 1784. The exception was American trade with French colonies in the Far East. In 1787, Charles Alexander de Calonne, the French controller-general, extended American trading privileges to all French ports in the vicinity of Mauritius. See Nussbaum, "The French Colonial Arrêt of 1784," 69-70; *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 510-511, 681-685; Sullivan, *Maryland and France, 1774-1789*, 137-143; Henry Sée, "Commerce between France and the United States," *American Historical Review*, 31 (1926): 734-35; and Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 23.

⁵⁸ David Ross and other Virginia merchants to Thomas Jefferson, October 18, 1785, in *The*

Vergennes defended the French policies as the best that could be hoped for, arguing that they granted Americans a freer trade than they enjoyed anywhere else. This, of course, was not true, and the fact that Vergennes made these arguments in February 1783 to in a letter to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, the minister plenipotentiary to the United States, three months before the *Arrêts* were actually declared, is a good indication that he knew the Americans would be disappointed. Charles Eugène Gabriel de La Croix, Marquis de Castries and the minister of marine, more readily admitted the hard truth to the Marquis de Lafayette. Like Eden and Lord Sheffield across the Channel, de Castries saw the United States as a potential commercial threat, and sought to block American access to his empire's colonial ports. He was thus an unwavering adversary of free trade, and likely expressed a degree of masked satisfaction when he informed Lafayette that "it will not be possible for us to give the degree of [commercial] freedom you desire" for America.⁵⁹ Although Lafayette and others continued the struggle for further trade liberalization, the minister's words spelled out the situation clearly: the revolutionary possibility that free trade would remake the Atlantic economy was over, and the measure of American independence was now in doubt.

Papers of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Julian Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), VIII, 650-51; Lewis Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington: The Carnegie Institute, 1933), II, 600; and Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 732. London, Bristol, Cowes, Liverpool, Whitehaven, and Greenock were opened to the American tobacco trade by Orders in Council of November 5, 1783. Subsequent Orders in Council opened Port Glasgow on November 19, 1783, Falmouth and Portsmouth on April 16, 1784, Hull on July 30, 1784, and Lancaster on November 24, 1784.

⁵⁹ Vergennes to La Luzerne, February 15, 1784, in *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, V, 226. Castries quoted in *The Papers of Robert Morris*, VIII, 697 n.26.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEOMERCANTILIST ECONOMY

As hopes for winning free trade concessions in Europe faded during late 1784 and early 1785, a commercial depression began to grip the republic. British firms that had offered long-term credit to Americans for the purchase of imports in the months immediately following the war began asking for payment. To satisfy their British creditors, American merchants who had been caught up in the speculative frenzy tried to collect on debts owed to them by farmers, shopkeepers, and artisans. However, the profligate spending on British goods had exhausted the supply of specie pumped into the economy during the war, and there were no profits from the export trade to make up for the loss. As Americans realized that the mind-numbing weight of their debts could easily crush all initiative, consumer spending evaporated. British imports into the United States declined from £3.5 million Sterling in 1784 to just £1.4 million in 1786—a decline of 60 percent in two years.¹

All over the country, the earlier jubilation over American prospects was replaced by the darkest predictions of the future. Many commentators fixed the blame for the downturn on the postwar spending rage. In the *Maryland Journal*, “Mentor” railed against the short-sighted and wasteful indulgence of his neighbors who “embarked in every expense, extravagance, and luxury that folly, fashion, or vice could suggest.” In a petition to the Congress, Baltimore’s artisans and tradesmen also blamed the city’s commercial troubles on those who “prodigally expended in the purchase of . . . articles from foreigners.” Other commentators blamed the collapse of free trade and the

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*:

subsequent restoration of European mercantilist policies as the root cause of the American crisis. Governor Benjamin Harrison of Virginia condemned the British merchants as “locusts that are crouding us here as so many emissaries” of the British government, “sent to sound out [our] inclinations” and lure and trick Americans into further debt. Arthur Campbell went even further, believing that a conspiracy had existed since the Paris peace treaty to thrust the country back into the arms of King George III. In October 1783 he confided in James Madison that “If my intelligence from a distant Correspondent, is right,” British policy since the king’s acknowledgement of American independence had aimed at the new nation’s destruction by “introducing luxury, draining our money, impairing public credit, and destroying public spirit.”²

Those who blamed Europe for America’s commercial problems clearly believed that free trade would have made a difference. Yet it is worth questioning whether or not the United States would have realized a greater measure of economic independence if the hopes of free trade advocates had been realized during the 1780s. How truly revolutionary was the American view of free trade? When historian John Crowley addressed this question, he anticipated writing a study about how Adam Smith’s views on free trade and Smith’s philosophy in general influenced the thinking of the Revolutionary generation. Crowley soon discovered that such a book “would be very short,” because American thinking on free trade was distinctly different from the views expressed in

Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), II, 1176.

² *Maryland Journal*, August 3, 1786; “To the President and Congress of the United States, the Petition of the Tradesmen, Mechanics, and Others, of the Town of Baltimore, April 11, 1789,” quoted in Louis Maganzin, “Economic Depression in Maryland and Virginia, 1783-1787” (Ph.D., Georgetown University, 1967), 42-43; Benjamin Harrison to the Virginia Delegates in Congress, September 26, 1783, and Arthur Campbell to James Madison, October 28, 1783, in *The Papers of James Madison*, ed. William Hutchinson and William Rachal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962-), VII, 359, 383.

Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. This should not be surprising given that the treatise was first published in 1776 at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and few Americans had read the manuscript by even the mid-1780s.³

Smith used the metaphor of the “invisible hand” to guide his argument that investment in and development of domestic industries would produce as much wealth and social benefit as investment in overseas trade. He believed that an exclusive focus on trade “tends to diminish, or, at least, to keep down” industry, and thus acts like “a dead weight upon the action of one of the great springs which puts into motion a great part of the business of mankind.” Smith does not deny that the manufactures of Great Britain had vastly increased since the inception of the Navigation Act, the genesis of the mercantilist system, but he maintains that the advance “has not been by means of the monopoly of . . . [colonial] trade, but in spite of that monopoly.” Restrictions and prohibitions, “like all the other mean and malignant expedients of the mercantile system, depresses the industry . . . of the country in whose favour it is established.” Smith thus supported free trade primarily as a method to foster society's evolution away from the mercantile system and towards investments of capital in domestic pursuits. Free trade was a means to an end, not an end unto itself.⁴

In the United States, the Revolutionary generation adopted a different approach to free trade; relative to Smith's thinking on the subject, the American application of his principles was incomplete. Most of the leading revolutionaries rejected a strong

³ John Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xi.

⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell and Andrew Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), II, 592, 610-11.

government role in the regulation of agriculture, maritime commerce, and handicraft production, and therefore should not be considered mercantilists. Such a role for government contradicted the most fundamental precepts of eighteenth-century republicanism.⁵ However, most Americans could be considered *neomercantilists*. The revolutionaries rejected the primacy of government action in guiding foreign trade, but few forsook the primacy of foreign trade itself in the creation of the wealth of the nation. Instead of investing in domestic production as Smith's analysis suggested, most Americans continued to fix their gaze across the Atlantic at markets over the ocean's horizon. Thomas Jefferson feared that such would be the case. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson hoped that after the war, Americans might "abandon the ocean altogether," and "leave to others to bring what we [Americans] shall want, and to carry what we can spare." He then recognized that "the actual habits of our countrymen attach them to commerce," and "they will exercise it for themselves."⁶ Most Americans of the

⁵ Maryland provided no protection at all against foreign imports. Virginia restricted trade to a number of enumerated ports, but did so in an effort to promote competition rather than restrict it. Most states followed a similar path. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania proved the exceptions, the former by establishing a parallel mercantilist regime to the British Orders in Council, and the latter by enacting a series of high tariff walls. See Drew McCoy, "The Virginia Port Bill of 1784," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 83 (1975): 288-303, and Richard Chew, "A New Hope for the Republic" (M.A., The College of William and Mary, 1992).

⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 174-75. Lawrence Peskin defines neomercantilism as an interest in "a positive balance of trade; an active state to direct the economy; a balanced, self-sufficient national economy; and a concern for the general good over individual interests." He thus identifies the position advocated Coxe, Hamilton, and Gallatin as neomercantilist. See Lawrence Peskin, "To 'Encourage and Protect' American Manufactures: The Intellectual Origins of Industrialization, 1763-1830" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1998), 105. Other historians share Peskin's definition of neomercantilism, but it seems to me that the definition is almost interchangeable with the commonly accepted definition of mercantilism. The only difference seems to be the relative power accorded to government: mercantilists advocated a strong hand for government in regulating trade and neomercantilists advocated a not-quite-so-strong hand for government in regulating trade. The definition for American neomercantilism offered here differs from that offered by Peskin.

Confederation period had not yet absorbed the primary lesson of Smith's work: free trade opens up opportunities for investments in domestic industries, and these are just as profitable and beneficial to the nation as investments in foreign commerce. Instead, Americans embraced free trade as an end unto itself, making it a tactic within the framework of traditional mercantilist thinking. As long as the neomercantilist *mentalité* remained preeminent in the American mind, merchants would continue to focus on Atlantic commerce instead of the domestic market.⁷

Baltimore merchant George Woolsey epitomized the American neomercantilist *mentalité*. During the trying days of the Continental Association, Woolsey complained to his partner, George Salmon, that if business did not improve, he would quit the overseas trade and buy land. He was almost certainly being facetious, but it is interesting that for Woolsey, the alternative to foreign commerce was agriculture, not domestic commerce. He did not consider, at least not in his griping to George Salmon and others, the idea of quitting overseas trade and investing his available capital in a manufacturing enterprise. For some Americans there were lingering fears after the Revolution about the corrosive effects of industrialization on public virtue. Sir James Steuart, a Scottish political economist, had established this standard axiom of eighteenth-century thought, stating that "when foreign demand begins to fail, so as not to be recalled, either industry must decline, or domestic luxury must begin."⁸ Yet few revolutionaries held so firm to this thinking as to exclude all attempts to develop a domestic market—least of all George Woolsey. Instead of a blind faith in republican abstractions, it was Woolsey's single-

⁷ Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence*, 75-83.

⁸ Sir James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, ed. Andrew Skinner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), II, 237.

minded belief in the neomercantilist perspective that limited his imagination and kept him from recognizing domestic commerce as a viable alternative to foreign trade.

That a neomercantilist *mentalité* like Woolsey's persisted in the Confederation period is bewildering. First, Americans, more so than any people in Europe, were in a position to take actuate Smith's philosophy and build a domestic economy. In the peace settlement of 1782, Great Britain ceded most of its territory in North America south of the St. Lawrence River and east of the Mississippi River to the newly independent United States. With the stroke of a pen, a thin line of loosely-confederated colonies hugging the Atlantic coast were transformed into a truly continental nation. A few intrepid pioneers like Daniel Boone had already settled beyond the mountains in the western frontier of the new republic, and enough had done so by the early 1790s for Kentucky to enter the union as the new nation's fifteenth state. By building connections to the growing backcountry, Americans could have shaken loose the manacles of British commercial dominance regardless of European mercantilist restrictions. Yet such dreams eluded Woolsey. When Americans looked to the West during the 1780s and 1790s, they typically perceived it in the same way as they had done so during the colonial period—as a source of land speculation rather than a place in which to develop new markets.⁹ The commercial focus of most Baltimoreans, like most Americans, remained strongly set on overseas trade thanks to the neomercantilist assumptions embedded within the American

⁹ Andrew Cayton sees a direct progression from colonial to post-colonial thinking about the west. He argued that "the proto-Federalist western policy that emerged by the end of the 1780s was largely an elaborate refinement of old ideas, a continuation of speculative schemes for a coordinated development of the trans-Appalachian region whose implementation had been interrupted by the American Revolution." See Andrew Cayton, "Radicals in the 'Western World': The Federalist Conquest of Trans-Appalachian North America," in *Federalists Reconsidered*, ed. Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara Oberg (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 79.

concept of free trade. This situation would not have changed even if European governments had not adopted restrictive trade policies. Rather than providing a real measure of independence, neomercantilism helped shape the limits of the Revolution by promoting dependence on overseas trade and stunting the process of market development in the backcountry.

THE CONFEDERATION'S ECONOMIC TROUBLES

A few modern historians have suggested that the commercial frustrations of the 1780s were largely limited to the northern ports and New England, but this was not the case. As early as April 1784, Henry Johnson was already out of patience with his Baltimore customers, complaining to his half-brother that it is “impossible to collect Cash from the [city’s] retailers after we have trusted them . . . If we had not two or three friends we should be obliged to hang ourselves.” By 1785, a pall shrouded Baltimore’s mercantile houses, and one by one, many of them quietly dissolved—including several of the city’s most successful firms. Clement Biddle & Company, whom George Washington himself had relied on, went bankrupt. Samuel and Robert Purviance, who played such leading roles in the Revolution, soon joined Biddle. Dozens of other houses hovered on the brink of failure, and struggled mightily to stay afloat.¹⁰

British imports into Maryland and Virginia plunged from £1,010,000 in 1784 to £857,000 in 1785, and kept declining until bottoming out at £657,000 in 1788. Although a smaller decline than the nation as a whole, the 35 percent decline over four years amounted to a precipitous state of affairs. Marylanders also continued to owe more than

¹⁰ Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, April 27, 1784, in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MS.498, MHS.

£3 million in various debts throughout the 1780s, and had no way to remit them.

Throughout the state, insolvencies mounted, and legal actions against debtors multiplied. As the number of suits doubled and then tripled as the decade wore on, Maryland courts became hopelessly clogged with cases. Baltimore Town was not yet independent of the county, thus suits brought against debtors in the city had to be heard in the county court, further delaying matters. Most of the debts owed were small, amounting to under £50, but several debtors owed money for claims on confiscations of loyalist property as well as tax in arrears. In these cases, debts could run into thousands of pounds.¹¹

If the United States had enjoyed an active export trade, many of the commercial embarrassments of the Confederation period could have easily been avoided. Debts could have been remitted to British creditors, and insolvencies could have been avoided. It is therefore tempting to point to the collapse of free trade as the source of the nation's commercial frustrations. Yet such an explanation is untenable. Despite the restoration of European mercantilist policies, American ships continued to trade freely throughout the West Indies. The Dutch, Danish, and Swedish islands remained open to American ships, and more than a year after the British Orders in Council, the French *arrêts*, and the Spanish restrictions were issued, American ships were able to gain entry to many British.

¹¹ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 1176; Philip Crowl, *Maryland During and After the Revolution: A Political and Economic Study* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1943), 83-110; and Maganzin, "Economic Depression in Maryland and Virginia," 177-202. Samuel Chase was among those who owed large sums, and he led the cause for debtor relief in the Maryland House of Delegates. Unfortunately for Chase, the more conservative Senate, which was filled with creditors anxious to be repaid, rejected all the House's efforts. Chase had been a resident of Annapolis during the Revolution, but in February 1786, Colonel John Eager Howard offered Chase land at the corner of Eutaw and Lexington Streets in downtown Baltimore as an incentive to get him the move to the city. The plan worked, and Chase built a three-and-a-half story brick townhouse on the spot. See James Haw, Francis Beirne, Rosamond Beirne, and R. Samuel Jett, *Stormy Patriot: The Life of Samuel Chase* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1980), 144-45.

French, and even Spanish islands as well. The ease with which American captains gained entry to the British islands was thanks in large part to the actions of the islanders themselves. During the debate over the American Intercourse Bill in 1783, merchants and planters in the West Indies flooded Parliament with petitions imploring the members to support the bill or risk starvation and the collapse of trade in the Caribbean. After the Orders in Council were issued, the freeholders of Antigua complained that their provisions would not last two months without an unlimited trade with the United States. The Baltimore community kept a close watch on the growing dissatisfaction throughout the region.¹²

When the hurricane seasons of 1784, 1785, and 1786 brought additional hardships to the islands, many colonial governors in the West Indies used their discretionary powers to open up their islands to American ships. Although special concessions such as these were only supposed to be made under extraordinary circumstances, at least one British island was open to American ships every year following the Revolution except 1787. Jamaica proved the most consistent in relaxing British restrictions in the years immediately following the war. Lieutenant-Governor Alured Clark opened the island to American ships in October and November 1783, and again from July 1784 until January 21, 1785. Over the next two years, devastating storms continued to sweep the island, compelling the governor to periodically reopen Kingston, Montego Bay, and other Jamaican ports to any ships carrying provisions—including those coming from the

¹² Edmund Burnett, "Observations of London Merchants on American Trade, 1783," *American Historical Review*, 18 (1913): 769-73, and Alice Keith, "Relaxations in the British Restrictions on the American Trade with the British West Indies, 1783-1802," *The Journal of Modern History*, 20 (1948): 1-2. The complaints of the freeholders on Antigua appeared in the *Bahama Gazette* for October 6, 1783, and the story was reprinted in the *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis) for December 18, 1783.

United States. The volume of American trade to Jamaica during these years was immense. Between October 1, 1785 and October 1, 1786, 249 American vessels totaling more than 20,000 tons legally entered the island.¹³

Jamaica was not the only island in the West Indies to open its ports. Governor William Brown opened Bermuda to American trade in 1783, Governor John Maxwell opened several ports in the Bahamas in 1784, and Governor John Orde kept Dominica open throughout all of 1784. Between October 1, 1784 and October 1, 1785, 88 American ships totaling 6,891 tons entered at Barbados thanks to the concession granted by Governor David Parry. Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton opened Bermuda to provisions in March 1789, and Parliament itself allowed Americans to load salt at Turk Island in the Bahamas in 1788. Even Thomas Shirley, the Governor of the Leeward Islands who lodged furious complaints with the British Foreign Secretary in the early 1780s about the questionable decisions of West Indian governors and the collusive practices of American merchants to smuggle goods into the British islands, agreed to open St. Kitts to imports of lumber. After 1787, Nevis and St. Kitts in the Leewards became the islands most frequently open to American ships. In the early 1790s, Santo Domingo, Grenada, the Grenadines, Jamaica, and Bermuda were each open at some point for several months.¹⁴

When colonial governors did not allow entry to American ships, American captains presented forged papers to claim French, Spanish, or British registry as needed.

¹³ Keith, "Relaxations in the British Restrictions," 2-3, 6-7.

¹⁴ Keith, "Relaxations in the British Restrictions," 5, 7-9, and Lowell Ragatz, "'Upon Every Principle of True Policy': The West Indies in the Second Empire," in *The American Revolution and the West Indies*, ed. Charles Toth (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 183-95.

Customs officials in the West Indies regularly accepted the fraudulent papers for an appropriate bribe. The practice was so widespread and successful that Baltimore merchant Henry Johnson proposed this course of action to his half-brother Frank. In February 1784, Henry wrote “You will not forget the proposition I made respecting the vessel under British colours. I do believe there is an opening there.” It was evidently rather easy to forge the papers, because Henry was confident that “If it [the voyage] could be done this quarter I would soon have a set of British papers.” If conditions changed, he was equally sure that they could “put the vessel again under American colours” without a problem.¹⁵

Failing all other options, ship captains simply smuggled cargoes ashore, and the Royal Navy usually did nothing to stop it because Admiral Sir Richard Hughes prohibited his captains from interdicting against the American trade. Hughes believed he had no authority to act because neither the Parliament nor the Admiralty had not given him a direct order to do so. The situation disgusted a young Horatio Nelson, recently arrived in the Caribbean as captain of the *Boreas*. Nelson and his fellow captains were at last able to convince Hughes in December 1784 that the clear intent of the Orders in Council gave him more than enough authority to act. Yet Hughes’s subsequent orders still prohibited naval officers from interfering with an American ship when a colonial British governor deemed it proper to give it entry. The admiral’s orders effectively handcuffed Nelson and allowed the American trade to continue unharassed. The young, headstrong Nelson finally took matters into his own hands on May 2, 1785 and seized the American schooner *Eclipse*. In the legal action that followed, Nelson prevailed and

¹⁵ Johnson, Johonnot & Co. [Henry Johnson] to Frank [Francis Johonnot], February 21, 1784, in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MHS.

established the precedent for other British captains to interdict against the American trade. Yet the victory proved short-lived. To avoid further seizures, American merchants thereafter avoided a direct trade with the British and French islands in favor of an indirect trade through the Danish and Dutch colonies. American captains would thus consign their cargoes to a merchant in one of the Dutch, Danish, French, or Swedish West Indies. The cargo could then be re-exported legally to the British islands. The most popular islands for this indirect American trade with the British islands were the Dutch islands of St. Eustatius and Curaçao, the Danish island of St. Croix, the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and St. Bartholomew's, which the French crown had leased to the Swedish government. The Royal Navy could do little to stop the practice, and the British Committee of Trade struggled to find an effective solution to the problem.¹⁶

Despite the prohibitions against American ships, captains clearly had little trouble entering allegedly closed ports, thus allowing American merchants to carry on a massive trade with the West Indies in the years following the Revolution. The clearances and tonnage for American ships thus steadily rose throughout the 1780s, leading a few historians to the conclusion that the republic did not face any real economic troubles during the Confederation period. An American ship captain would have found such a conclusion absurd. From a captain's perspective, mercantilist restrictions could be circumvented, but there was no escape from the laws of supply and demand. The real

¹⁶ Charles Ritcheson, *The Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1969), 212-27. In 1787, Parliament sought a compromise by allowing single-decked American vessels of no more than 70 tons burden to enter in Jamaica at Kingston, Savanna-la-Mar, Montego Bay, and St. Lucea, St. George in Grenada, Roseau in Dominica, and Nassau in the Bahamas. However, the vessels were still not allowed to carry tobacco or grains, only cotton, indigo, livestock, timber products of various types, furs, and the produce of European colonies. See Keith, "Relaxations in the British Restrictions," 2, and Ragatz, "'Upon Every Principle of True Policy,'" 191, 194.

problems for Americans began after a ship had entered a West Indian port and the captain tried to find buyers for the cargo. Thanks to an international glut in flour and wheat that choked off demand and caused prices to plummet, captains were frequently unable to find buyers. Most merchants expected that a fall in commodity prices would follow the cessation of hostilities and the ending of the Royal Navy's blockade, but the deflation that actually resulted was much greater than most Americans anticipated. Tobacco prices also suffered from oversupply as well as a series of price-fixing schemes that drained profitability out of the trade as neatly as the crop itself drained nutrients out of the soil.

Market conditions throughout the Atlantic—a classic question of supply and demand rather than a problem arising from European restrictions on trade—were thus the real cause of the city's and the nation's economic troubles in the 1780s. No matter where they turned, American captains discovered that the prices they asked consistently exceeded what the market would bear. Precious little demand existed for grains, and where there was a demand, there was almost certainly a plethora of merchant ship captains from every part of the Atlantic world competing for the same business. When unable to find buyers, captains either had to return home with unsold cargoes, or consign their cargoes to a local agent to wait for prices to improve. Either way, American merchants typically experienced a loss, either from the eventual sale of their cargoes at clearance or auction prices, or the wholesale loss of their cargoes because they could not be sold or even consigned. The efforts of even the craftiest captains were confounded by this miserable state of affairs.

The worldwide oversupply of wheat and flour developed as a result of the Revolution. Largely cut off from American supplies during the war, European merchants

scrambled to find alternative sources for American grains in Europe. Many of the subsequent efforts to expand wheat cultivation and flour manufacture in Europe met with great success. When Portugal's harvest failed in 1785, the nation's merchants were able to import wheat from Sicily rather than Maryland to relieve the shortfall. The Lisbon firm of Hudson and Harrison reported to Baltimore merchant Tench Tilghman that "we are abundantly supplied with every kind of grain . . . that should a further quantity arrive, prices must diminish very considerably." The Portuguese also developed a domestic flour milling capacity, eliminating the need to import refined flour from America. After 1786, the market at Lisbon was closed entirely to American flour imports. Long harvests in the early 1780s in the Baltics, England, and France meant that the Portuguese could have turned to these markets as well before having to rely on American imports. Baltimoreans contributed the problem of oversupply too by increasing the volume of flour exports from 50,700 barrels in 1784 to more than 130,000 barrels in 1788. At the same time, flour prices fell from \$6.47 to \$4.61 per barrel, marking a twenty-year low for the commodity.¹⁷

In Baltimore, Tench Tilghman received the same bad news from merchants in almost every port in Europe. From London, Charles Herries informed Tilghman that "at the prices you quote for your Produce there [is] no Encouragement for speculation." James Burn, also of London, concurred that American "prices are much too high for the markets in Europe—and there must be great alterations before anything can be

¹⁷ Hudson and Harrison to Tench Tilghman & Co., July 27, 1785, in Tench Tilghman Papers, MS.1445, MHS, and Geoffrey Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean, 1750-1815* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 66-67, and Appendix D. Gilbert derived his figures for flour prices based on the price lists in Anne Bezanson, Robert Gray, and Miriam Hussey, *Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, 1784-1861* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936-1937), II, 80.

undertaken.” From Falmouth, George Fox claimed that “Prices being so low in Europe & high with you, nothing but evident loss must attend to it.” From Coruna on the northwest coast of Spain, Teronimo Hixosa complained that “the price of Indian Corn was so high last season that it cou’d not turn to acc[oun]t.” From Cadiz on the southwest coast of Spain, James Duff wrote that “prices of wheat in Spain are & mist continue high for some time.” Duff also cautioned that “we have also reason to expect our receiving supply of soft wheat as well from the Baltick as from England to say nothing of your Quarter.” This left no room at all for American produce at the Spanish market. Livingston & Turnbull of Gibraltar and De Larrard and Company of Barcelona confirmed that while grain prices in southern Spain had been high briefly in late 1784, supplies from England, France, the Levant, and the Barbary Coast had driven prices down in 1785.¹⁸

Merchants also experienced severe problems in the tobacco trade after the war, though the reasons were somewhat different from the problems associated with wheat. Supplies of American tobacco were limited during the war, and thus prices were greatly inflated. With the cessation of hostilities, the Farmers General expected prices to fall as low as 25 livres per quintal, or just above their prewar levels. In the Chesapeake, however, costs for tobacco production remained very high because of the destruction from the war. Particularly damaging had been the raids conducted by Major General Edward Mathew and Commodore Sir George Collier in May 1779, which pillaged the shipyard at Portsmouth, burned the town of Suffolk, removed 518 formerly enslaved

¹⁸ Charles Herries & Co. to Tench Tilghman & Co., August 3, 1785; James Burn to Tench Tilghman & Co., July 9 1784; Teronimo Hixosa to Tench Tilghman & Co., April 27, 1785; George E. Fox & Sons to Tench Tilghman & Co., June 8, 1785; James Duff to Tench Tilghman & Co., August 2, 1784 and September 20, 1785; De Larrard & Co. to Tench Tilghman & Co., December 11, 1784 and October 22, 1785; and Livingston & Turnbull to Tench Tilghman & Co., October 10, 1785, in Tench Tilghman Papers, MHS.

African Americans from the state, demolished 137 vessels, and destroyed tobacco and other goods valued at more than £2 million. Collier also detached the pesky sloop-of-war *Otter*, which returned once again to the upper Bay to raid plantations on Maryland's Eastern Shore and the Virginia coast. In late 1780 and early 1781, Benedict Arnold, then a Brigadier General in the British army following his treason against the United States, extended the raiding up the James River as far as Richmond.¹⁹

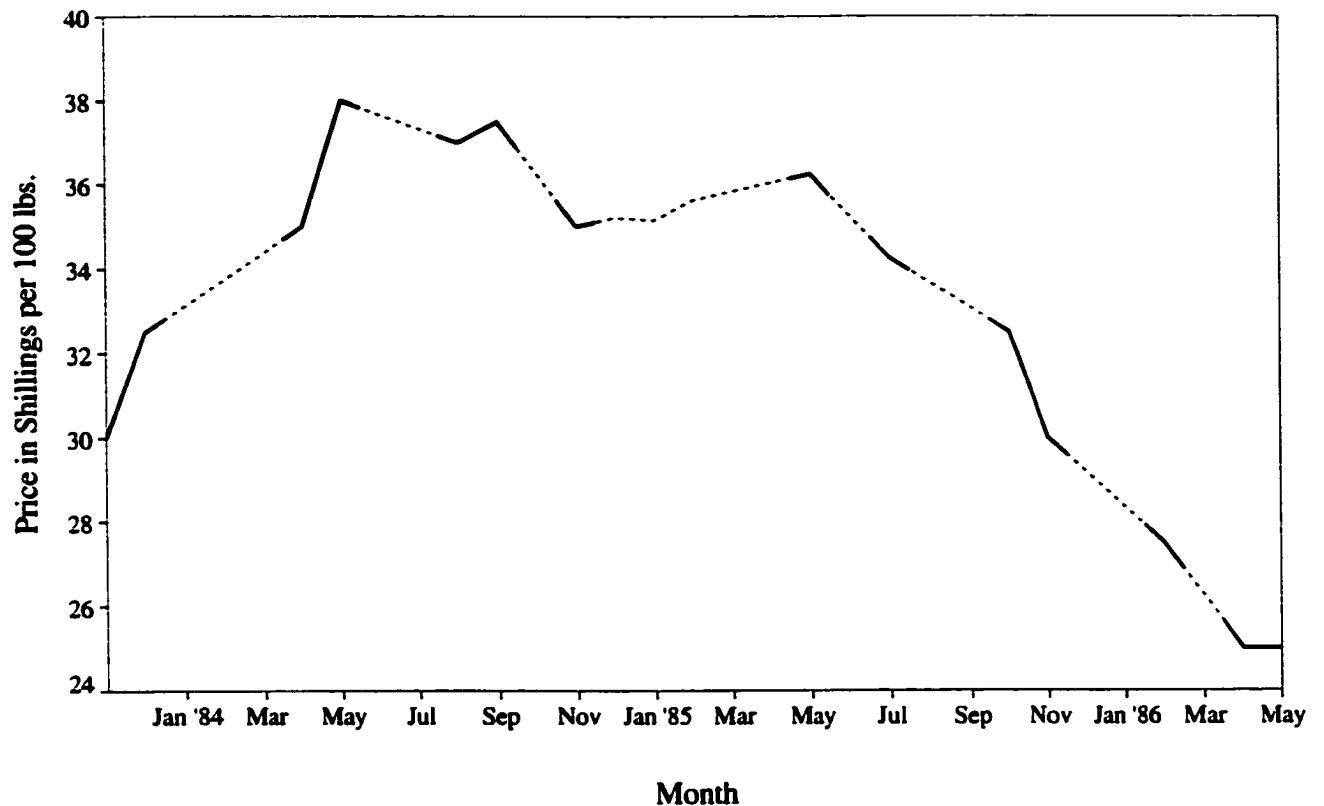
Although not as brutal as the Collier-Mathew invasion, Arnold's actions helped prevent a recovery in the tobacco-growing regions of the lower Chesapeake Bay. After a brief plunge in tobacco prices in 1783, the continued high costs of production kept prices high over the following eighteen months. As seen in Figure 3-1, prices on Maryland tobacco rose from 30s/Ct Maryland currency in November 1783, or the equivalent of 23½ livres per quintal, to 38s/Ct Maryland currency in May 1785, or the equivalent of 30 livres per quintal. Given the costs of freight, commissions, and duties, Maryland leaf had to be resold in Europe for at least 31½-33½ livres per quintal in November 1783, and 38-40 livres per quintal by May 1785 for a merchant to break-even. Unfortunately, the Farmers General were only willing to offer 35 livres per quintal because new tobacco plantations in the Carolinas and Georgia had enabled the overall supply of American leaf to match prewar levels despite nagging problems of postwar recovery in the Chesapeake.²⁰

¹⁹ John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 204-08, 221-25.

²⁰ Jacob Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), II, 728-31, 752-54. To convert shillings per hundredweight Maryland currency (s/Ct Md) to livres per quintal, the price needs to be converted to Sterling using a multiplier of 0.6 (at par, £100 Sterling equaled £166 2/3 Maryland currency). In May 1785, Maryland leaf sold for 38 s/Ct Md, or 22s 10d Sterling. The multiplier of 1.309 may then

Figure 3-1

Prices on Maryland Tobacco between November 1783 and May 1786



Source: Jacob Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), II, 754.

Note: The dotted line indicates where missing data has been extrapolated.

Faced with such dismal prospects, Baltimore merchant Matthew Ridley conspired with merchants in the free French port of L'Orient as early as April 1783 to fix the price of tobacco at 42 livres per quintal. Ridley guaranteed the procurement of 10,000 to 13,000 hogsheads of tobacco per year if the French would guarantee the price. If the plan had succeeded, Maryland leaf would have become immediately profitable. The Comte de Vergennes, who was interested in insuring a commercial connection with the newly independent United States, liked the idea, though was unsure about the people involved. Ridley had served as Maryland's purchasing agent in France, but Vergennes did not know him personally. The French minister thus sought the advice of Benjamin Franklin, who served as an American envoy in Paris throughout most of the war and had won the universal respect and admiration of the French court. Franklin suggested that any such plan be carried forward by the firm of Morris and Willing in Philadelphia. Although Robert Morris was initially interested, he soon backed out, and thus Franklin directed Vergennes to consider his grandnephew, Jonathan Williams, whose father-in-law, William Alexander, had been the Farmers General's purchasing agent in Scotland. Such blatant nepotism did not give Vergennes cause for concern because such arrangements were common in monarchical governments. Vergennes thus approached Williams and Alexander, who proposed to supply the Farmers General with 15,000 hogsheads per year at just 30 livres per quintal. Unlike Ridley's proposal, the price set by Williams and Alexander was even lower than what the Farmers General had been offering, and just slightly higher than the prewar price for tobacco. The plan seemingly doomed American planters to a less-than-favorable arrangement, and not surprisingly, Vergennes leapt on

be used to convert the price in Sterling to livres per quintal (see footnote 23, this chapter). Thus, 22s 10d Sterling equals 29.8452 livres, or a price of approximately 30 livres per quintal.

the deal, approving it October 3, 1783.²¹

Williams and Alexander did not believe that they had sold out their American suppliers. After all, if the arrangement remained unprofitable, there was no way to coerce the sale of tobacco. Williams and Alexander made the arrangements because they fully expected the price of tobacco to plummet to near its prewar levels very soon. By pegging the commodity's price at 30 livres per quintal, both they and their American suppliers would achieve windfall profits. It was a high-risk strategy, but in March 1784, Robert Morris sensed that Williams and Alexander might be right. Morris thus joined the firm as a silent partner with a one-third interest in the company. When the long-expected decline failed to materialize, however, Alexander was only able to buy 1 million pounds of tobacco, of which just 738,760 pounds, or approximately 740 of the 15,000 promised hogsheads, were shipped to France. Despite the setback, Morris was still convinced that a fall in prices was coming, and he offered a new contract to the Farmers General in 1784 guaranteeing delivery of an astounding 20,000 hogsheads of tobacco at a price of 36 livres per quintal. By this point, the Farmers General had boosted their prices to nearly 45 livres per quintal, thus the Morris contract seemingly promised to manipulate the market to the detriment of Chesapeake merchants and planters. Thomas Jefferson, who was serving as the new U.S. minister to the French court, was livid about the arrangements, and complained vociferously to Vergennes. Nonetheless, the deal was struck. When prices in the Chesapeake once again failed to decline significantly in 1785, Morris was only able to procure 5,808 hogsheads of tobacco. When tobacco prices finally declined in 1786 to the long-anticipated levels, however, Morris was able to

²¹ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 741-43.

deliver more than the 20,000 hogsheads promised in the agreement.²²

Jefferson was convinced that Morris had benefited from the price-fixing scheme on the backs of Chesapeake planters. He was partially right. Although Morris's contract did not directly cause a fall in tobacco prices, his schemes did raise French expectations of an impending fall in American prices, and this had the effect of retarding rather than encouraging trade. From Bayonne, David Alexander wrote to Tench Tilghman that "prices of Tob[acco] have been so high in Y[ou]r Continent, no speculations could be made." From Paris, William Short, the American Chargé d'Affaires, concluded that "the experience of seven years has suffered to show" that trade between France and America was not profitable. Between 1784 and 1788, not a single "French house having undertaken that Commerce" did so "without losing by it" according to Short. Others echoed the observation. From Bordeaux, French and Nephew stated that American exports were "rated so amazingly high for our European markets, in short there has been no possibility of our speculating or transacting any business whatever with America but with the greatest certainty of loss."²³

²² Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, II, 747-73.

²³ David Alexander to Tench Tilghman & Co., October 4, 1785, and French & Nephew to Tench Tilghman & Co., November 12, 1785, in Tench Tilghman Papers, MHS, and American State Papers, "Extract of a Letter from William Short, Chargé des Affaires of the United States at the Court of France," October 21, 1790, *Foreign Relations*, Class I, vol. I, 120-121, quoted in Maganzin, "Economic Depression in Virginia and Maryland," 94-95.

THE CHIMERA OF FOREIGN TRADE

Despite the overwhelming evidence that profitable markets were few and far between, rumors nonetheless continued to circulate in the 1780s of places in need of American supplies. Following their neomercantilist inclinations, merchants paid more attention to rumor than reality and continued to send cargoes to either the West Indies or Europe in hopes of gaining an advantageous trade. The voyages ended almost invariably with disappointing if not ruinous results. Paul Bentalou, who established a new mercantile house in Baltimore after the war, suffered through several misadventures based on such rumors. Born in Montauban, France in 1755, Bentalou joined the Royal French Dragoons at the age of 15. Like several other young French idealists his age, Bentalou left his native land for the United States in 1776 to join the American crusade for independence. He received a commission as a lieutenant of cavalry, and at the Battle of Brandywine, had the opportunity to meet Count Pulaski, the famed Polish cavalry hero of the Revolution. Pulaski was impressed with the young Frenchman, and had Bentalou transferred under his command as a captain of cavalry. Bentalou spent the next two years of the war at the Count's side, and at the disastrous Battle of Savannah in 1779, it was Bentalou who carried the mortally wounded Pulaski from the field.²⁴

Paroled by the British, Bentalou spent the rest of the war in Baltimore as a recruiting officer. It was there that he met and fell in love with Katharine Keeports, daughter of Baltimore merchant Jacob Keeports. The couple were married before Christmas 1780, and remained in Baltimore. After the war, Bentalou started a mercantile

²⁴ Bentalou File in Dielman-Hayward File, MHS. The file draws on newspaper reprints of Bentalou's life in *The Baltimorean*, January 22, 1881, and *Baltimore American*, November 10, 1903.

partnership with John Dumeste, the husband of Elizabeth Keeports, Katharine's sister. The firm began auspiciously. In July 1784, Bentalou purchased a three-eighths interest in the *General Washington*, the same ship that Joshua Barney had recaptured from the British and then commanded with great success. Unfortunately for Bentalou and Dumeste, the purchase of this fine vessel turned out to be the firm's only encouraging event for several years.²⁵

Bentalou retained Richard Stevens as the captain of the *General Washington*, and borrowed nearly £2,700 from fellow Baltimore merchants Richard Curson and Adrian Valck to purchase dry goods to supplement the ship's cargo of flour. In September 1784, Stevens set out for the Caribbean, but the voyage did not go well. He landed first at St. Thomas in the British Virgin Islands, and later at the Dutch island of Curaçao, where, according to Bentalou, Stevens had "by a most unaccountable stupidity, disposed of his flour below Baltimore prices, whilst he well knew." Stevens had encountered the classic problem that ship captains faced after the Revolution, an inability to find buyers because of glutted markets. Hoping to salvage the expedition, he crossed the Atlantic to Spain in search of a market. His luck was no better in Europe than in the Caribbean, and he returned to Jamaica and Cuba to try once more, unsuccessfully, to sell his cargo. Bentalou suffered a loss of £695 13s on the voyage in addition to the debt owed Curson

²⁵ "Paul Bentalou," in Dielman-Hayward File, MHS, and entry for July 1784, Paul Bentalou Journal, MS.125, MHS. Francis Casenave and Thomas Burling held shares of three-eighths and a one-quarter in the *General Washington*, respectively. For the earlier history of the *General Washington*, see chapter two. Bentalou referred to the ship he purchased from Congress as the *George Washington*, but it was the *General Washington* that Congress sold at auction and Bentalou bought in July 1784. The Continental navy had a 32-gun frigate named the *Washington* that was destroyed in 1777, but there was no Continental warship ever named the *George Washington*. See Louis Arthur Norton, *Joshua Barney: Hero of the Revolution and 1812* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 98-99, and Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974), 528-29.

and Valck.²⁶ He blamed the failure of the voyage on Stevens, and never used the captain again for any of the firm's dealings. As time would prove, however, Stevens had taken the prudent course in minimizing the voyage's losses, and his venture for Bentalou ultimately proved one of the least disastrous of the firm's dealings in the 1780s.

When rumors swirled in Fall 1784 that flour was in short supply on Hispaniola, Bentalou's associate, Francis Casenave, sailed for Port-au-Prince in December 1784 with a hold full of flour in the sloop *Flying Fish*. Dumeste followed in the *General Washington* with more flour, as well as the unsold dry goods from Stevens's voyage. Casenave entered at Port-au-Prince, but when he was unable to find any buyers, he had to consign the cargo to a local merchant. Dumeste was denied entrance at Port-au-Prince and entered instead at Kingston, Jamaica. Like Casenave, he was unable to sell his cargo, and consigned it to a local merchant, Alexander Linde. In each place, the agents for the consigned cargoes waited in vain for market conditions to improve, and ultimately sold the flour at below cost before it rotted. In Port-au-Prince, Casenave's agent allegedly sold the cargo, which cost more than £2,500, for just £1,150. Casenave refused to give the agent's name, however, and Bentalou was sure that he had been swindled. According to Bentalou, the two men "mutually agreed to refer the settlement of the whole to arbitrators officially appointed by the French consul." Unfortunately for Bentalou, the arbitrators concluded that the low prices quoted by Casenave in his ledger were the result of bad judgement rather than fraud. In addition, Casenave claimed losses against Bentalou for his interest in Dumeste's consignment to Linde, and the arbitrators agreed. Bentalou ultimately suffered losses on these voyages of £1,321 for Casenave's cargo, and

²⁶ August to September 1784, and January 1786, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

approximately £2,046 for Dumeste's consignment in Jamaica. To make matters worse, Dumeste also wrecked the *General Washington* on the return voyage to Baltimore in April 1785, bringing a tragic and unfortunate ending to the celebrated vessel.²⁷

Rumors once again circulated in August 1785 that Hispaniola needed flour. Bentalou quickly outfitted two brigs, the *Debonair* and *Prospect*, as well as the sloop *Polly* to carry flour to the island. When the ships arrived in September, their captains discovered that French vessels carrying flour from Bordeaux had already crowded into the port, and as Bentalou later related, "a ruinous depression on the prices of that article then followed." Dumeste, who commanded the *Debonair*, consigned the cargoes to a local agent, Cottineau, Chottard, & Company. Bentalou remained ignorant as to the fate of the cargoes until September 16, 1788, nearly three years later. On that day, he received a letter from Henry Marchand, a Port-au-Prince merchant who had taken over the accounts of Cottineau, Chottard, and Company, and much to Bentalou's consternation, the 1785 voyage had ended in the same way as all the others. Bentalou wrote that he "had the mortification to find, that, far from being in our debt, as I had flattered myself, they, on the contrary, brought against us a balance" of more than £13,000.²⁸

Bentalou was not alone in his troubles. Joshua Barney and John Stricker sent their first consignment of goods to Havana in late 1784, but the profits were squandered

²⁷ December 1784 to April 1785, [early] 1788, and April 1789, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS. Linde provided a note to Bentalou in 1789 showing losses on Dumeste's consignment of \$4,261, the equivalent of approximately £1,600. In addition, the arbitrators in the case between Bentalou and Casenave awarded the latter £448 2s 4d for his interest in Dumeste's consignment, thus bringing Bentalou's total losses on the voyage to approximately £2,046.

²⁸ August to September 1785, and September 1788, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

by the local agent. Another of the firm's cargoes spoiled when they could find no buyers, and as business continued to flounder in 1785, Barney slowly disengaged from the firm's activities.²⁹ Henry Johnson met with similar frustrations, and he was very pleased when his half-brother, George Johonnot, took over the Baltimore branch of their firm in May 1784. Johonnot struggled mightily to scurry up any business. None of his half-brother's letters had succeeded in establishing new commercial ties either in Europe or the West Indies, and thus Johonnot had to rely on the firm's meager coastal trade with New England and its unprofitable connections to trading partners in Havana. By July, his frustration concerning the embarrassed situation of the city's commerce boiled over. Writing to Henry, he complained that "Business is excessive dull . . . and such a quantity of Havanna Sugars we have had stor'd as to break the main beam of the second floor" of the warehouse. Not surprisingly, Johonnot soon rejoined the rest of his family back in Boston. After a flurry of speculation in flour in 1784 and 1785, merchant Christian Keener also faced rough times. In 1786, his purchases of commodities fell from £1,647 the previous year to £483 in 1786, and continued falling to just £256 by 1788. By that time he had largely abandoned large flour purchases, and was no longer even speculating in rum. The largest part of his business came from 99 barrels of shad and herring worth just over £50.³⁰

Even Robert Oliver, who eventually retired a millionaire, struggled mightily

²⁹ Norton, *Joshua Barney*, 101-02.

³⁰ George Johonnot to Henry Johnson, July 13, 1784, in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MHS, and [Christian] Keener Account Book, MS.514, MHS. Rhoda Dorsey is sure that all three brothers in the firm Johnson, Johonnot, and Co. returned to Boston, but she is unsure when. See Rhoda Dorsey, "The Conduct of Business in Baltimore, 1783-1785: As Seen in the Letterbook of Johnson, Johonnot, & Co.," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 55 (1960): 242.

through these years. His partnership with Simm ended by February 1785 with little fanfare. The firm had imported goods from L'Orient and Cadiz in the previous year and likely made little profit as Oliver was only able to invest £1,000 Maryland currency in May 1785 into his new partnership with Hugh Thompson. The new firm focused on the tobacco and flour trade with the free French ports, where they sent 27 of their 84 ships over the next three years. The value of the firm's trade with L'Orient reached £19,000 by 1788, but Oliver and Thompson realized a net loss on of £12 on this trade. Similar results plagued the firm's other export accounts too. The value of the firm's total exports for 1785-1789 was £46,875, but Oliver and Thompson barely managed to cover their costs on this trade. The firm's balance sheet as of March 3, 1789 showed net earnings of £8,625 for the previous four years, but net earnings from exports totaled just £232—a profit margin of less than one-half of one percent. Oliver was able to increase his initial investment in the firm from £1,000 to £3,336 by early 1789, and Thompson increased his net worth from £2,300 to £6,553 thanks to commissions earned for transactions completed for other merchants, and strategic investments in ship ownership and insurance.³¹

That other merchants faced miseries was not a source of comfort to Bentalou. By January 1786, the French emigre had reached a crossroads in his life. Almost £20,000 in debt and facing possible legal action by his creditors, he knew that his next voyage had to

³¹ Stuart Bruchey, *Robert Oliver, Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 52-73. Bruchey points out that many of these export accounts were still open on March 3, 1789. The closed accounts that showed net losses were L'Orient, Bordeaux, Liverpool, the West Indies, Boston, and Petersburg. Only Teneriffe, St. Croix, and Newry showed moderate gains. The accounts for Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Amsterdam, Marseilles, Nantes, Jamaica, and St. Thomas were still open. The final outcome of these ventures is unknown due to a gap in the firm's extant records, but Bruchey suggests that when closed, it is likely that the firm may have actually shown a net loss.

be a success. Otherwise, it appeared that he and Dumeste would share the same fate as so many other Baltimore firms in the mid to late 1780s. With “such a load of difficulties so frightfully accumulated,” he thus “determined to have Dumeste at home and to try [his] own luck abroad.” To secure a cargo of flour and tobacco, he had to post two bonds, one for £350 with the Baltimore firm Usher and Donaldson, and a second for £687 10s with the Baltimore firm Wilson and Stumps. In May 1786, Bentalou departed for Bayonne with his wife aboard the *Heartwigh*. Throughout “a most disagreeable, long & tedious passage,” his firm’s survival weighed heavily upon his mind.³²

Arriving in Bayonne in August 1786, Bentalou found no buyers for his cargo and was forced to store it. Fortunately, Frederick Folger, whom Bentalou knew as Baltimore merchant John Sterret’s favorite ship captain, sent a letter asking Bentalou about procuring a cargo in Bordeaux suitable for the market in Charleston, South Carolina. The plan was to exchange the French goods for rice, and return to Bordeaux in time for Lent. Folger offered Bentalou up to a half-interest in the cargo, but Bentalou did not have that kind of capital. Using his unsold tobacco as collateral, Bentalou was able to convince Pierre Changeur, and old family friend, to loan him more than 30,000 livres (the equivalent of approximately £1,250) to finance a share in the venture. Once again, the firm was on the line, and once again, disappointment followed. After departing for Charleston in fall 1786, Folger did not return to Bordeaux until July 1787, months after Lent had ended. It turned out that the normally reliable Folger had altered course to St. Eustatius, where he exchanged the French goods for rum and gin. Folger then proceeded to Charleston, where he consigned the cargo to Robert Hazlehurst for a smaller supply of

³² Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 62, and January to May 1786, and September 1786, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

rice and tobacco than anticipated by the investors back in France. Upon his return to Bordeaux, Bentalou's entire share of the Charleston cargo was turned over to Changeur to repay the loan. Once again, the venture had failed, and by November, Bentalou had reached the end of his tether. Returning to Baltimore, he lamented that "Such was the truly disturbing situation in which I found our affairs . . . and so puzzled was I in that cruel dilemma, that having almost given myself up to despair, I could discover no way how to extricate myself, or how to continue going on."³³

One last chance at commercial redemption was afforded to Bentalou thanks to the intervention of Dumeste's brother. A planter with significant estates and commercial interests in the Mascarene Islands, located north and east of Madagascar, Dumeste's brother desired to initiate a trade with America and looked to his family in Baltimore to facilitate it.³⁴ In November 1787, Bentalou was able to convince his friend and fellow merchant, William Vanwyck, to lend him \$700 to gain a one-twelfth interest in the small 100-ton brig *Traveller* owned by Baltimore merchant James Clark and commanded by Captain Daniel Howland. The investment was embarrassingly small, but Bentalou considered himself fortunate to have received credit from anyone. Dumeste soon

³³ August 1786 to November 1787, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

³⁴ The Mascarene Islands include Ile de France and Ile de Bourbon. The former was settled by the Dutch in 1638, who introduced sugarcane as a cash crop. The French seized the island in 1721, introducing enslaved African labor, and changing the name of the island to Ile de France. The British seized the island in 1810, changing its name to Mauritius and replacing the enslaved African population with Indian Hindu workers. Direct British rule continued until 1968, and the new Republic of Mauritius severed all remaining connections to the British crown in 1992. The island had a population of more than one million in 2000 with Hindus making up a slight majority over Christians and Muslims. The other island in the Mascarenes, Ile de Bourbon, is better known today as Réunion. It was occupied by the French in 1665 and thereafter remained a French colony. With a population of almost 725,000 in 2000, Réunion is France's most populous overseas possession today. The island elects five deputies and three senators to the French Parliament.

departed on the *Traveller* for the Cape of Good Hope and the French islands beyond, leaving Bentalou behind to await word of the voyage's fortunes and the firm's ultimate fate.³⁵

BOUNDED MARKETS IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

Given the wretched state of overseas trade in the mid-1780s and the enormous potential for developing markets in the backcountry, it is surprising that a greater interest in the city's hinterlands did not finally emerge by the end of the decade. Throughout the warm, humid summer months of 1788, Paul Bentalou could do little except wait to hear of Dumeste's return, and mull over his options if the commercial venture to the Mascarene Islands turned out to be a failure. Unlike George Woolsey, Bentalou never openly considered the life of a farmer, not even in jest. Returning to France was a possibility, but not a very palatable one because the country's economy was in a worse condition than that of the United States. Faced with a colossal national debt far greater than America's, and racked by growing discontent in both the countryside and the cities, it was apparent from even 5,000 miles away that the *ancien régime* was about to topple. Cornered by the failure of overseas trade and the dangerous state of affairs in his ancestral home, the idea of developing a return trade to the backcountry must have crossed Bentalou's mind and that of many other merchants in the suffering town. When the city's commercial frustrations forced merchants to undertake enormously risky ventures to the Mascarene Islands and beyond, someone must have considered alternatives.

³⁵ November 1787, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

The neomercantilist *mentalité* was pervasive, and certainly contributed to the lack of imagination regarding opportunities. However, the woeful prospects for development in many areas of the backcountry played just as important a role in discouraging any schemes to build market connections to the hinterland. In the lower Potomac River valley to the south of the city, there was evidence that the area would never evolve beyond an agricultural hinterland. The valley encompassed St. Marys, Charles, Calvert, Prince George's, and Montgomery counties in southern Maryland, as well as most of northern Virginia extending westward to the Shenandoah River. The Tidewater areas included some of the wealthiest tobacco-growing lands in the colonial period, and the valley as a whole was the closest area to Baltimore for market expansion. Most of the region, including the Potomac River itself, lay within Maryland's borders, and thus Baltimoreans enjoyed a political advantage over merchants in the growing city of Alexandria, Virginia, as well as those in the new federal city of Washington. Competition from merchants in Annapolis also promised to be weak. With tobacco prices steadily in decline after the Revolution, however, indebtedness swept across the region. The number of judgements in lawsuits against debtors rocketed from just 41 in 1783 to well over 200 by 1788 in Prince Georges County, and from 47 in 1783 to 208 in 1787 in Ann Arundel County.³⁶ Few were left untormented by their creditors. Even worse, the declining fortunes and growing indebtedness among tobacco planters caused population to stagnate and then decline in many areas, leading to the erosion of local economies and the disintegration of the social order throughout the region. For Baltimore merchants and artisans, the large investments of capital needed for developing greater

³⁶ Maganzin, "Economic Depression in Maryland and Virginia," 265-66. Also see Frances Robb, "Industry in the Potomac River Valley, 1790-1860" (Ph.D., West Virginia University, 1991).

commercial connections to the area were not justified.

The troubled condition of planters in Charles County during the 1780s and 1790s typified the limitations of the region for market expansion. Situated neatly between the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers, Charles County had been one of the most prosperous places in the Chesapeake prior to the war. Following the Revolution, the tobacco trade collapsed, and even the county's leading citizens felt the sting of ill fortune. Colonel Francis Ware was among them. Easily elected Sheriff in 1785, Ware was in the top ten percent of the county's property owners. Just two years later, however, he faced conviction by the General Court of Maryland for debts of more than £14,000 owed to the state. Parts of his plantation, as well as his enslaved workers, livestock, and furniture were auctioned off, his book debts were turned over to his creditors, and trustees assumed control over the remainder of his lands. Ware became a tenant on his former property, and by 1800 was poverty-stricken. He was not alone. Other prominent planters, including Thomas Howe Ridgate and Gerald B. Causin also faced the ignominy of insolvency and having their estates confiscated and auctioned away by the courts. Unable to maintain significant numbers of enslaved workers, many planters sold them off as quickly as possible. Sellers extended as much as two years' credit to buyers, revealing the desperation many slaveholders faced to their reduce costs immediately. The hard times produced an astonishing out-migration after 1790 which drained the county of its population and its economic life.³⁷

The experience of planters in Charles County served as a warning to Baltimore merchants. Although the port never lost its claim as Maryland's leading tobacco entrepot

³⁷ Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 222-62.

after the war, the city's merchants steadily divested their interests in the tobacco trade. Tobacco exports from the naval district at Baltimore equaled 15,958 hogsheads in 1784, and thereafter declined steadily to just 8,184 hogsheads by 1790. Baltimore accounted for more than 60 percent of Maryland's tobacco exports as late as 1785, and just 33 percent five years later. Most of the tobacco purchased was of inferior quality as well, or "trash" tobacco. Tench Tilghman, acting on behalf of Robert Morris, bought up over 3,000 hogsheads of inferior grades between 1784 and 1786. The trade in higher grade tobacco simply did not interest most Baltimore merchants. The Annapolis firm of Wallace, Johnson, and Muir, which specialized in the latter trade, had only one Baltimore purchasing agent in 1785, John Sterrett. The other twelve agents were located along the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers or in Virginia, and there was one on Tred Haven Creek in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Baltimore's mercantile community feared that no profit could arise from the trade, and financial ruin would be the inevitable consequence. They proved right. Between 1785 and 1786, Wallace, Johnson, and Muir contracted a whopping debt of more than £67,000. The partners then struggled for three years to find a way to repay their London creditors before ultimately dissolving the firm on January 1, 1790.³⁸

Many planters in southern Maryland recognized the limitations of the tobacco trade, and began switching to wheat cultivation after the war. With the abolition of the French tobacco monopoly in 1791, the number of farmers making the switch rocketed into the thousands. The rush to wheat production had a ruinous effect on the region's ecology. In an attempt to recoup losses and debts dating back to the Revolution,

³⁸ Edward Papenfuse, *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 169-215.

slaveholders plowed up as many acres as possible to raise wheat, often without leaving any fields fallow or using any type of fertilizer to replenish the soil. When marginal lands were overplowed, rain washed valuable topsoil into the rivers, ending the chances for planters to revert back to tobacco cultivation if prices rebounded. The zealotry with which the conversion to wheat took place insured the long-term decline of the tobacco trade; exports dwindled from their postwar high in 1790 of 118,000 hogsheads and failed to reach that level again until 1840.

Baltimore merchants engrossed both the wheat trade and what was left of the tobacco trade in southern Maryland in the 1790s. In 1791, the city's exports amounted to \$1.5 million, or 70 percent of the state's overseas trade. By 1795, Baltimore's exports surpassed \$5.5 million, and accounted for over 95 percent of the state's overseas trade. Annapolis stagnated as a result, and in the words of Edward Papenfuse, "settled into the sleepy routine of a quiet market town" at the turn of the century.³⁹ Yet supplanting Annapolis as the chief entrepot for all of Maryland strengthened the neomercantilist reliance on foreign trade, and did nothing to promote the development of a return trade to the backcountry. Furthermore, the Baltimore merchant community's penetration of southern Maryland's export markets certainly did not help the region regain its lost economic strength. Indeed, the activities of Baltimore's merchants likely undermined the region's economy. The commercial connections between the city and southern Maryland supported an expanding number of bay pilots, and initially helped a tiny number of local

³⁹ Papenfuse, *In Pursuit of Profit*, 225. For the consequences of the conversion from tobacco to wheat cultivation, see Lorena Walsh, "Rural African Americans in the Constitutional Era in Maryland, 1776-1810," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 84 (1989): 337. For the decline in the tobacco trade, see *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 899. For Baltimore's increasing domination of Maryland's trade, see Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade in the Caribbean*, 123.

millers and merchants. At the same time, however, the farming population declined and the possibilities for industrialization were stunted. In St. Mary's County, where farmers accounted for more than ninety percent of the population in 1790, the number of people pursuing agriculture declined by ten to fifteen percent in the following decade. Together, the population of Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince Georges, and St. Mary's counties declined by more than four percent during the 1790s, and remained stagnant between 1800 and 1820.⁴⁰

In the Susquehanna River valley to the north of the city, the prospects for market development were far better than along the old Tobacco Coast. In the two decades after the American Revolution, western Pennsylvania witnessed a surge in population growth, and on the surface, a vibrant trade appeared to flourish between Baltimore and the region's farmers.⁴¹ Hundreds of wagons rumbled southward along muddy, heavily rutted

⁴⁰ Robb, "Industry in the Potomac River Valley," 279-80; Bayly Ellen Marks, "Rural Response to Urban Penetration: Baltimore and St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1790-1840," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 8 (1982): 113-27; and Arthur Eli Karinen, "Numerical and Distributional Aspects of Maryland Population, 1631-1840" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1958), 208. The combined population of these counties in 1790 was 88,761. This figure dropped to 84,976 in 1800, and fell to 84,928 in 1820.

⁴¹ For the classic statement on the growth of post-Revolutionary Western Pennsylvania, see Solomon Buck and Elizabeth Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939). The literature on the growth of post-Revolutionary western Pennsylvania has since grown quite extensive. See especially James Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Museum Commission, 1947); Jane Garrett, "Philadelphia and Baltimore, 1790-1840: A Study of Intra-Regional Unity," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 55 (1960): 1-13; Homer Rosenberger, "Migrations of the Pennsylvania Germans to Western Pennsylvania," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 53 (1970): 319-335 and 54 (1971): 58-76; Paul Doutrich, "The Evolution of an American Town: Yorktown, Pennsylvania, 1740-1790" (Ph.D., University of Kentucky, 1985); Peter Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); R. Eugene Harper, *The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 1770-1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991); Jo N. Hays, "Overlapping Hinterlands: York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, 1800-1850," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 116 (1992): 295-323; Judith Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place': Economic, Social, and Gender-Role Development in a Backcountry Town, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1750-1810" (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1994); and Paul

roads to reach the streets of Baltimore and the docks along the city's waterfront. The sight of so many wagons heading south from the Pennsylvania backcountry unnerved Philadelphia's mercantile community. In 1787, Thomas Paine wrote that "the commerce and traffic of the Back Country members and the parts they represent goes to Baltimore. . . . If one part of the state is thus to go on in opposing the other, no great good can come to either." The editor of Philadelphia's *Independent Gazette* agreed with Paine's concerns, adding that the commercial unity of the state could not be achieved until the diversion of trade from western Pennsylvania to Baltimore ceased. "Happy would it be for Pennsylvania," he continued, if the state's "boundaries were comprised by the Susquehanah; we should then be more compact and more united."⁴²

The correspondents to the *Independent Gazette* need not have worried too much. Although the quantity of wheat, flour, and whiskey arriving at Baltimore from north of the Mason-Dixon line in the 1780s and 1790s easily surpassed the city's totals for the colonial period, Philadelphia still received the bulk of the Pennsylvania backcountry trade, and held a near-monopoly over the return trade in dry goods. In 1789, Benjamin Rush estimated that "in the months between September and October it is not uncommon to meet in one day from fifty to an hundred . . . wagons on their way to Philadelphia." In 1790, Pennsylvania's Society for the Improvement of Roads and Internal Navigation estimated that the upper Susquehanna valley's down-river trade amounted to 150,000 bushels per year, and that the grain typically traveled to Middletown and then to Philadelphia. The report did not predict Philadelphia's impending doom at the hands of

Moyer, "Wild Yankees: Settlement, Conflict, & Localism Along Pennsylvania's Northeast Frontier, 1760-1820" (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1999).

⁴² *The Independent Gazette*, March 7, 1787 and March 12, 1787.

engrossing Baltimoreans, and no alarms raised over the possibility that Baltimore merchants and artisans would develop a return trade to the backcountry. Wagons arrived in Baltimore by the dozens stuffed to the brim with farm produce, but most of them returned to the backcountry with relatively light cargoes. Salt, salted fish, sugar, tea, and coffee might be loaded for the return trip, but in the decade-and-a-half following the war, few wagons carried significant quantities of manufactured goods into the backcountry from Baltimore. In York, Carlisle, Harrisburg, and elsewhere in western Pennsylvania, few advertisements listed the arrival of dry goods and luxury items from Baltimore, and only a handful of Baltimore firms decided to advertise in backcountry newspapers before 1800.⁴³

Even when the potential for a return trade to western Pennsylvania appeared promising, Baltimore's merchants and artisans typically demonstrated no interest in developing the connection. Jacob Stofft, who owned an inn on King Street in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, purchased 30 cases of Rhenish wine, a total of 828 bottles, from the Baltimore firm of Valck, Burger, and Schouten. The transactions occurred between March 24 and July 8, 1786; if the trade had continued throughout the year at the same pace, Stofft would have imported over 3,000 bottles from the Baltimore firm. Instead, Stofft's interests thereafter turned primarily to the Philadelphia market. On June 5, 1792, he became one of the original subscribers to the Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike

⁴³ Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, PA: Pennsylvania-German Society, 1910), quoted in George Shumway, Edward Durell, and Howard Frey, *Conestoga Wagon, 1750-1850* (York, PA: George Shumway, 1964), 21. The report of the Society for the Improvement of Roads and Internal Navigation is quoted in Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 176-77.

Company.⁴⁴ A similar trend characterized the business dealings of York merchant Conrad Leatherman. His account books listed 452 purchases in Philadelphia between 1790 and 1800, and only 38 purchases made in Baltimore. Closer inspection reveals that most of the Baltimore purchases occurred in summer and autumn 1793 during an outbreak of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia. Leatherman acquired kettles, shoemaking wares, hinges, ink powder, knives, and a menagerie of cloths from velvet and silk to calico from twelve different Baltimore merchants, usually at the same prices that he received from Philadelphia merchants. Baltimore's merchants could have met the needs of this backcountry merchant, and might have been able to maintain at least part of their return trade to the York merchant. Like Stofft, however, Leatherman turned decisively back toward the Philadelphia market. Most of his remaining purchases from Baltimore consisted of pitch tar and salt.⁴⁵

The lack of effective inland transportation helped deflate the ambitions of Baltimore merchants and artisans to pursue a regular return trade with western Pennsylvanians like Stofft and Leatherman. No major improvements were made to navigation along the lower Susquehanna River prior to 1790, thus the dangerous currents and exposed rocks below Turkey Hill continued to act as a natural boundary to those wishing to reach the Chesapeake Bay and the Baltimore market beyond. At the other end of the rapids, the same ancient boulders that blocked the progress of Captain John Smith's expedition in 1608 also blocked the development of a return trade from

⁴⁴ Hubley Collection, MG. 2, box 1, The Lancaster County Historical Society, and *Historical Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, 22 (1918): 95.

⁴⁵ Conrad Leatherman Account Book, BR-11, Historical Society of York County, and Hays, "Overlapping Hinterlands," 311.

Baltimore to the backcountry. Johann David Schoepf, the chief surgeon with the Ansbach regiment who remained for a brief time in the United States during the 1780s, highlighted the difficulties the river presented. He reported that following the end of the Revolutionary War, “a few bravos . . . made the voyage in two boats from here [Sunbury] to Baltimore and back,” but the effort had been framed “out of vanity.” Since that feat, “the difficulties and dangers have kept them and others from any further attempt.”⁴⁶ To make matters even worse, the Susquehanna valley was plagued by major floods during the 1780s. Ice flows destroyed homes and farms on both branches of the river in March 1784, and another flood struck the North Branch in October 1786. The latter became known as the “Great Pumpkin Flood,” because “heavy pumpkins came tumbling downstream like great orange cannonballs and had much the same effect when houses or men stood in the way,” according to one observer.⁴⁷

Navigation along the Susquehanna River did improve somewhat in the 1790s thanks to the introduction of arks—flat bottomed vessels designed to negotiate the craggy, rock-strewn Susquehanna. Unlike the small flatboats typically used on the upper reaches of the river, arks were large, boxy freighters, typically 75 feet long and 16 feet wide. Their awkward shape made the vessels almost impossible to steer, requiring their crews to use enormous 30 foot-long pine sweeps to conduct the boats downstream.⁴⁸ Yet

⁴⁶ Sunbury is located in central Pennsylvania where the West Branch and North Branch of the Susquehanna River meet. See Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation [1783-1784]*, trans. and ed. Alfred Morrison (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1911), I, 178; Carl Carmer, *The Susquehanna* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1955), 446-50; and Susan Stranahan, *Susquehanna, River of Dreams* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 33-37.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Stranahan, *Susquehanna*, 119.

⁴⁸ The name “ark” was given to the large river freighters by backcountry residents, although the reasons for the adoption of this particular name remain obscure. The ambitiousness of the scheme to conquer the waters of the Susquehanna might have recalled Noah’s efforts to conquer

these ungainly vessels made the difference in opening up the down-river trade to Baltimore. On April 20, 1792, Baltimore newspapers reported with “pleasure . . . that Mr. Michael Kryder arrived here on Monday with 104 barrels of flour, which he brought from his mill above the standing stone, on the Juniata [River], down the river to the Susquehanna” in an ark. He reshipped his flour at Havre-de-Grace, completing the journey in five days. Kryder’s trip proved that “navigation of the Susquehanna, heretofore thought impracticable for boats of burden,” could now be achieved. By 1800, arks were traversing down the West and North Branches of the Susquehanna as well, and the sound of the boat horns could be heard throughout the valley. Ark traffic ballooned over the next thirty years. Between April and July 1817, 343 arks and almost 1,000 smaller craft descended the river below Columbia. In 1822, \$1,337,925 in goods reached Port Deposit, Maryland, from which most were reshipped to Baltimore. By the 1820s, Baltimore flour inspections averaged 524,636 barrels per year against the 341,818 barrels per year at Philadelphia. Even with the introduction of the arks, however, the Susquehanna remained a one-way river. Once the large freight vessels reached Port Deposit or Havre-de-Grace, they were doomed. Unable to make a return trip upstream, they were usually broken apart and the timber used in their construction was resold.⁴⁹ Arks therefore aided the further development of Baltimore as an entrepot, and did little to assist in the development of a return trade to the backcountry.

Overland transportation in the mid-Atlantic remained just as unpromising as it

the flood, or the shape of the boat itself might have inspired the name.

⁴⁹ *Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser*, May 2, 1792; Carmer, *The Susquehanna*, 285-88; George Lightner, *Susquehanna Register of Arks, Rafts, etc., Arriving at Port Deposit, in the Year 1822*, (Baltimore, 1823), Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Public Library, Baltimore; and Livingood, *Trade Rivalry*, 26, 37, 55.

had been during the colonial period. In Maryland, local authorities still directed road construction after the Revolution, and thus most through ways continued in a wretched state of disrepair. It is not immediately obvious, however, why the abysmal state of the region's roadways necessarily retarded the development of a return trade. Compared to bulky commodities like wheat, flour, and whiskey, which suffered from very low value to weight ratios, most manufactured goods could be shipped, in theory, over much greater distances at far less cost. Based on the nominal costs of transportation, it should have been more profitable for Baltimore merchants and artisans to send manufactured goods to the backcountry than it was for western Pennsylvania farmers and shopkeepers to send farm produce to the city. However, nominal transportation costs based on value to weight ratios assume that the goods in question will actually arrive at their destination in one piece. This presents a problem in making a direct comparison between farm produce and manufactured items; wheat and flour did not shatter, china did. Merchants and artisans faced the risk of a cargo being smashed when a wagon wheel caught the edge of a rut in the road at the wrong angle; this created additional opportunity costs that helped stunt the development of a return trade from Baltimore due to the wretched state of the roadways.

Settlers in western Pennsylvania realized that better vehicles could neutralize the opportunity costs of shipping a broad range of manufactured goods. By the late eighteenth century, backcountry settlers had refined the traditional Conestoga wagon from its rough-hewn colonial ancestors to meet the challenge of mid-Atlantic roads. With yards of white canvas soaring above the red-painted upper wood panelling of the wagons and their blue-painted undercarriages, the Conestogas of the post-Revolutionary

period were an imposing sight then, and would be today. By 1800, a typical Conestoga was able to haul several tons of produce, and measured up to twenty-four feet in length. With a team of four or six horses harnessed to it, the entire rig could reach a length of sixty feet, or the size of a modern eighteen-wheel tractor-trailer. Even more imposing were the wheels, which typically measured three to four feet in diameter in the front, while the larger back wheels towered four or five feet above the road. The massive canopied wagon top stretched up to eleven feet above the road. It was supported by up to thirteen large hoops and covered the dramatically swept body of the wagon. No longer a simple farm wagon, the Conestoga had evolved into a rugged, long-distance hauler, ready to act as the vanguard of western expansion and commerce.⁵⁰

Yet even the specially-built Conestogas often proved no match for American roads. Few other experiences fired the pens of foreign writers like travel on American roads, especially those in the mid-Atlantic. In February 1796, one harried traveler was astonished at the wreckage of dozens of overturned carriages, wagons, and stages on the road from Baltimore to Philadelphia road. Conditions were little better going south from Baltimore to Alexandria and Washington. Robert Hunter never forgot the experience he had on this road in November 1785. A young merchant from London, he had traveled over land from Quebec down through New York to Philadelphia and Baltimore, yet the road to Alexandria was in his mind “the worst . . . I have been [on] yet—nothing but deep gullies and steep hills.” Hunter marveled how “we were not all killed. But fortunately we had a most capital driver.” Along such abysmal roads, the driver could indeed make all the difference. On a trip from Elkton, Maryland to a ferry on the Susquehanna, Isaac

⁵⁰ Richard Dunlop, *Wheels West, 1590-1900* (New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1977), 29-32, and Shumway, Durell, and Frey, *Conestoga Wagon*, 1-26. Also see the discussion in chapter one.

Weld described how “the driver frequently called to the passengers in the stage to lean out of the carriage first at one side, then at the other, to prevent it from oversetting in the deep ruts.” Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville, a French aristocrat, took the road from the ferry back to Baltimore in 1788. He did not find the experience pleasing, as “the roads were almost all terrible, clayey and full of deep ruts. We traveled all the way through the woods and were often forced to clear the way for the stage around trees.” Warville believed American carriages and wagons to be far superior to their French counterparts, yet “these French carriages, which travel over the finest roads, do a league an hour. Oh! If Americans had such roads,” he exclaimed, “with what speed they would travel!” Until then, commerce would be difficult. Moreau de Saint-Méry agreed. A French revolutionary and political ally of the Marquis de Lafayette, Moreau was forced to flee Paris in 1793. He subsequently traveled throughout the United States during the mid-1790s, and concluded that trade between Philadelphia and Baltimore “would be too costly if carried by land.”⁵¹

The lack of adequate inland transportation was not lost upon legislators on either

⁵¹ James Callender, *The American annual register, or, historical memoirs of the United States for the Year 1796* (Philadelphia: Bioren and Madan, 1797), 34; Robert Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786, Being a Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London*, ed. Louis Wright and Marion Tirling (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1943), 187; Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America, & the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, during the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: J. Stockdale, 1800); Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville, *New Travels in the United States*, ed. Durand Escheverria, trans. Mara Soceanuvanos and Durand Escheverria (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 339, 153; and Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de St. Méry, *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey [1793-1798]*, trans. and ed. Kenneth Roberts and Anna Roberts (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Co., 1947), 82. Moreau was born in Martinique, and studied law in Paris where he attained the rank of *avocat au parlement*. He returned to the West Indies where he became a member of the *conseil supérieur* of Cap François in San Domingo. After 1789, he became a leading revolutionary, serving as Vice President of the Paris Commune. With the rise of Robespierre, however, Moreau was forced to flee Paris to Normandy and then to the United States. He boarded a vessel at Le Havre on November 9, 1793, just ahead of an order arrived for his arrest.

side of the Mason-Dixon Line. As early as September 1783, the Pennsylvania legislature began to search for ways to improve the roads between Philadelphia and the lower Susquehanna Valley, and explored the possibility of building a canal linking the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Rivers. Farmers in Lancaster County had always sent their produce to Philadelphia, but improved roads and a new canal would have greatly expanded Philadelphia's reach into the backcountry, providing the needed first step in building an integrated regional market with Philadelphia as the hub. The Maryland assembly responded to the challenge in November by incorporating the Proprietors of the Susquehanna Canal. Baltimore-area merchants and planters with a stake in the city's commercial connections to the north pledged £18,500 of the needed £20,000 in subscriptions.⁵² For the moment, it appeared that the mid-Atlantic region might roar of its neomercantilist shell and embrace a full-blown market revolution. This was not to be the case.

After a series of political twists, the efforts of transportation enthusiasts ultimately and ironically reinforced the neomercantilist *mentalité* to ignore the backcountry. Planters and merchants in southern Maryland were jealous of Baltimore's special treatment, and in 1784, they supported the efforts of George Washington and other northern Virginia planters who wished to improve navigation along sixty miles of the Potomac River between Georgetown to Harpers Ferry. Washington welcomed the assistance of the southern Maryland planters. As a member of the House of Burgesses in

⁵² J. Lee Hartman, "Pennsylvania's Grand Plan of Post-Revolutionary Internal Improvement," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 65 (1941): 445-54; Paul Kent Walker, "The Baltimore Community and the American Revolution: A Study in Urban Development, 1763-1783" (Ph.D. Diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1975), 351; and William Arthur O'Brien, "Challenge to Consensus: Social, Political and Economic Implications of Maryland Sectionalism, 1776-1789" (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, 1979), 131.

1772, Washington had supported efforts to improve navigation on the Potomac, but the efforts had floundered in the Maryland Assembly thanks to the opposition of Baltimore merchants. The new coalition proved powerful enough to overcome the opposition of the mercantile interest, and on March 20, 1785, Thomas Johnson, Thomas Stone, Samuel Chase, and Daniel of St. Thomas Jennifer met with a group of Virginia delegates at Alexandria. The resulting agreement, known as the Mount Vernon Compact, called for the Maryland assembly to incorporate the Potomac Company with George Washington as its president, and appropriate £3,000 for the construction of a road from the upper Potomac to the Cheat River. Within five months, the Potomac Company raised £40,000, mostly from merchants and planters in Winchester, Georgetown, Alexandria, Frederick, and Annapolis.⁵³

To head off what appeared to be the beginning of a regional competition for government and private resources in the construction of transportation improvements, the Pennsylvania assembly called for a tri-state convention in 1785 where delegates from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware could discuss commercial development throughout the region. The powerful coalition of southern Maryland and northern Virginia planters and merchants opposed the tri-state meeting, however, demanding that Virginia be included in any such discussions. At the same time, politicians concerned about foreign trade issues and British mercantilist policies were clamoring for a multi-state convention to discuss the possibility of allowing Congress to regulate both foreign

⁵³ Corra Bacon-Foster, *Early Chapters in the Development of the Potomac Route to the West* (Washington, DC: Columbia Historical Society, 1912), 33-60; O'Brien, "Challenge to Consensus," 134-36; Ronald Shaw, *Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States, 1790-1860* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 7-8; and Tina Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town, 1765-1790" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), 283-86.

and interstate commerce. The two movements were quickly conflated, and thus what began as an effort to address concerns over westward expansion became lost in the deliberations over foreign trade. The subsequent meeting in Annapolis in September 1786 was so poorly attended that the delegates assembled decided to adjourn the meeting and call for an even larger convention to convene the following May in Philadelphia. The proposed convention promised to expand the discussion to include a myriad of political and economic problems associated with the Articles of Confederation. With political interest building for a constitutional convention, concern for improving transportation connections on the Potomac and Susquehanna valleys largely dissipated.⁵⁴

Even if adequate transportation to the backcountry had been built, there was no guarantee that a significant return trade would have developed in the decade-and-a-half after the Revolution. Philadelphia merchants jealously guarded their return trade with the lower Susquehanna valley, especially on the east side of the river. When Samuel and D. Byrnes of Baltimore advertised “French and Nova Scotia Plaister of Paris” in the *Lancaster Journal*, Philadelphia firms quickly besieged the newspaper with advertisements. Although Byrnes’s ad appeared only once, Daniel Drinker of Philadelphia continued advertising “Plaister of Paris” for several months. He added that his product could even be “manufactured by the ton.” Lancaster’s German-language newspapers printed stories about events in Baltimore two to four weeks late while similar stories about Philadelphia appeared in the pages of the *Lancaster Zeitung* in one or two days—even news from Boston and New York City was seldom a week old. More

⁵⁴ O’Brien, “Challenge to Consensus,” 142-46, and Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison & the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 69-75.

importantly, German-language newspapers listed Philadelphia commodity prices, a strong indication that Philadelphia provided the primary market for their wheat and flour.⁵⁵

In neighboring Dauphin County, Baltimoreans did not fare much better. Before 1800, there is no evidence of any trade between the area and the Maryland port. On the other hand, Philadelphia's business community involved themselves directly in the economy of Harrisburg, the county's leading town.⁵⁶ No Baltimore merchants advertised in Harrisburg newspapers, nor did any Harrisburg shopkeepers announce the arrival of merchandise from Baltimore. However, two Philadelphia firms, Edmund Milne and Company of No. 84 Arch Street and Miller and Hossinger of No. 176 Market Street, appealed directly to the shopkeepers in the growing town. Milne guaranteed "that storekeepers and others may be supplied . . . on the shortest notice and most reasonable terms." Miller and Hossinger made similar claims. A Harrisburg shopkeeper boasted that he could dispose of merchandize "as low as . . . in Philadelphia, excepting the portage only," and at least one Harrisburg merchant entered into a partnership with a Philadelphian to exploit the wheat trade. Harrisburg merchant Thomas Elder, who remained active in the backcountry trade in whiskey, iron, and cattle during the 1780s and 1790s, always favored the Philadelphia market.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Lancaster Journal* [English-language], January 8, and March 17-April 28, 1798, and *Lancaster Zeitung* [German-language], July 23, 1788.

⁵⁶ Harrisburg numbered only 875 people in 1790. Incorporated as a borough on April 13, 1791, the town grew steadily. In 1800, it boasted a population of 1,472, and by 1810 reached a population of 2,287. As with most communities in America, its growth slowed during the next decade, but it still managed to reach 2,990 inhabitants by 1820. See Luther Reily Kelkner, *History of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), II, 514.

⁵⁷ Elder Family Papers, MG.70, FF-6, Dauphin County Historical Society, and *The Oracle of*

West of the river, Philadelphia's influence was less dominating. Farmers and shopkeepers in York County divided their loyalties between the two cities by selling a considerable portion of their produce to Baltimore while buying retail goods from Philadelphia. Unlike German-language newspapers in Lancaster County across the river, the *York Gazette* listed Baltimore commodity prices for "Superfein Flour, Flour, Schinfen, and Butter." However, advertisements for retail goods demonstrate the bias toward the Philadelphia market for the return trade.⁵⁸ Advertisements for land sales in *The Pennsylvania Herald*, an English-language York newspaper, also reveal a concern by English-speaking farmers for proximity to the Baltimore market. In 1788, D. Grier advertised 269 acres, "its situation very convenient to market, being about four miles from York, four miles from the river Susquehanna, fifty-seven miles from Baltimore and eighty-five miles from Philadelphia." Many others did not bother to mention Philadelphia, and included only the farm's distance to the Maryland port. William McCreary advertised land "all well situated, and in good repair, convenient to a number of merchant mills, and 55 miles from Baltimore market." Baltimore merchants Thomas and Samuel Hollingsworth also tried to sell a mill in Frederick County, Maryland through the York newspaper. In terms of the return trade to the backcountry, though, *The Pennsylvania Herald* showed the same pattern as the *York Gazette*. In the eleven years before 1800 for which there is a complete run, three Baltimore ads and three Philadelphia

Dauphin and Harrisburg Advertiser, September 9, 1793, August 3 and December 7, 1795, and September 19, 1796.

⁵⁸ *York Gazette* [German-language], September 30 and October 21, 1796. Baltimore price-currents appeared weekly in 1796-1797. Several scholars have identified this process of farmers "selling in Baltimore" and "buying in Philadelphia." See Hays, "Overlapping Hinterlands," 295-323; Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place'," 297-303; and Livingood, *Trade Rivalry*, 18.

ads appeared. Samuel Smith advertised “fine and coarse salt . . . near head of Market Street . . . lower than it is sold at any other store Baltimore.” A Baltimore dentist made known the availability of his services on Gay Street in Baltimore, and George Eichelberger proclaimed the opening of his tobacco manufactory on Water Street. None of these early Baltimore advertisements catered to the dry goods trade. Philadelphia’s ads offered brass, cutlery, ironmongery, German goods, and books, demonstrating that York County farmers and shopkeepers continued to trade in commodities at Baltimore, and for dry goods from Philadelphia before 1800.⁵⁹

Farmers and shopkeepers in Cumberland County conformed to the same pattern seen in York County. Carlisle newspapers printed Philadelphia commodity prices, indicating that farmers and shopkeepers divided the backcountry trade between the two eastern cities. In the seven months from June to December 1789, an unidentified Carlisle merchant sent 126 barrels of flour to John Holmes in Baltimore and purchased 21½ bushels of coarse and fine salt, three barrels of herring and one barrel of mackerel. In this same period, he sent only 43 barrels of flour to Philadelphia, yet Philadelphia remained the primary market for his dry goods. In July 1789, he spent £180 9s on sundries purchased from seven different Philadelphia merchants. Another unidentified Carlisle merchant received over £200 in dry goods from Philadelphia in September 1792. Tailors in the growing cloth trade of Cumberland County flaunted their acquaintance with European and Philadelphia fashions in Carlisle newspapers. Philadelphia connections also helped Carlisle merchants John and Samuel Postlethwaite develop commercial

⁵⁹ *Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser* [English-language], December 31, 1788, November 4, 1789, September 15, 1790, December 14, 1791, November 20, 1792, September 18, 1793, December 4, 1793, July 19, 1797, and June 13, 1798.

connections to Kentucky, and allowed William Irvine, another Carlisle merchant, to speculate in trade in Louisiana and Florida.⁶⁰

In Pennsylvania's western frontier, settlement had not yet advanced to any significant degree at the end of the Revolution. On a journey from Carlisle to the Ohio River, Johann David Schoepf passed through much of the upper Juniata River valley, through the mountains, and then into western Pennsylvania. Soon after departing from Carlisle, he observed how settlement quickly gave way to nature. Shippensburg had "a good number of houses," but it was the population of wild turkeys, rather than people, that increased dramatically in number the further west they traveled. He commented that "we had hitherto seen [turkeys] only here or there, and singly," in the eastern parts of the state. Yet "today we came upon sundry large flocks . . . running on the road." As the journey continued into the mountains, Schoepf became increasingly agitated. Upon his arrival at Bedford, he commented that it was "a little town, but a little town in a great wilderness may easily please without beauty." Not even half-way from Carlisle to Pittsburgh, he concluded that the people around Bedford "do not yet produce what is necessary to pay for their wants. Hunting must supply the rest; skins and furs, which their guns bring in, are all they have to send to market." The trade of the area was carried on by peddlers, who "go about the country in little wagons, selling and swapping." He speculated that perhaps in the future, "the Juniata may contribute somewhat to a better trade." Yet little had changed seven years later. Samuel Maclay, a judge from Northumberland county dispatched by the Pennsylvania government in 1790 to make a

⁶⁰ Ridner, "'A Much Improved Place'," 167-169, 289-92, 298, and *Carlisle Gazette*, September 7, 1785, October 19, 1785, April 19, 1786, and April 22, 1795. Ridner believes that the unidentified merchant was Joseph Givin, who operated in Carlisle between 1788 and 1791.

survey of the western branch of the Susquehanna, reached the same conclusions as Schoepf did after the Revolution.⁶¹

In addition to inadequate transportation, the return trade to the backcountry was also frustrated by the financial burdens under which western Pennsylvania farmers groaned. The indebtedness in the region had been created in large part by the Pennsylvania government's decision to withdraw the state's paper money after the war. Due to a lack of specie in the backcountry, farmers were thereafter unable to pay their debts or their taxes, and the number of foreclosures in western Pennsylvania skyrocketed. Between 1782 and 1792, courts seized more than 6,000 farms in Westmoreland County, effecting more than 40 percent of all the families in the county. Matters worsened further when Congress passed the excise tax on distilled liquor in 1791. Western Pennsylvanians bristled at the inequity; a land tax would have shifted the burden of taxation onto the landholding eastern elites, but the so-called Whiskey Tax shifted the tax burden onto the already indebted western farmers. Not surprisingly, backcountry residents refused to pay the tax, and moved to close down sheriff sales. State officials who tried to enforce the laws were routinely threatened, and on July 15, 1794, western Pennsylvania erupted into open rebellion after a skirmish in Allegheny county between a mob and a state supervisor of collections led to the death of several people. In October, President George Washington authorized the introduction of approximately 12,000 federal troops into the backcountry to crush the Whiskey Rebellion. Although the army left as quickly as it had arrived, the commercial frustrations of western Pennsylvania's farmers continued through

⁶¹ Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, I, 218-19, 222, 227-29, and Samuel Maclay, *Journal of Samuel Maclay, while Surveying the West Branch of the Susquehanna, the Sinnemahoning and the Allegheny Rivers in 1790* (Williamsport, PA: Gazette and Bulletin Printing House, 1887).

the end of the century, eclipsing any chance that Baltimore's merchants and artisans could extend their commercial relationship with the area.⁶²

In Pennsylvania's northern frontier, along the North Branch of the Susquehanna, the ongoing conflict between Pennsylvania and Connecticut claimants over lands in the Wyoming Valley continued to frustrate market development throughout the region. By the early 1780s, the area had not yet recovered from the destruction of the Revolutionary War. On a visit to Wilkes Barre in 1783, Johann David Schoepf commented that the settlement "lies in an extraordinarily fertile valley," but the settlers "are pauper-poor . . . They live in miserable block-houses, are badly clothed, farm carelessly, and love easeful days." The people faced a daily struggle to eke out a subsistence, having sent most of "their corn and wheat over the mountains" the previous winter to be made into "cyder and brandy." In the spring, "they had neither seed-corn nor bread; they lived meanwhile on milk and blackberries, or by hunting." Although Schoepf painted a bleak picture of the settlers' lives, conditions actually worsened after his departure.⁶³

In early 1783, at the time of Schoepf's visit, the Pennsylvania government was seeking to resolve the land disputes in the Wyoming Valley. A federal tribunal in Trenton had already issued a decree on December 30, 1782 awarding the territory to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but the decree did not resolve the sticky issue of overlapping land claims between Pennamites and Yankees themselves. When

⁶² Terry Bouton, "'No wonder the times were troublesome': The Origins of Fries' Rebellion," *Pennsylvania History*, 67 (2000): 24-31, 33-36, and Jeffrey Davis, "Guarding the Republican Interest: The Western Pennsylvania Democratic Societies and the Excise Tax," *Pennsylvania History*, 67 (2000): 43-50. For the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania, see Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶³ Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, I, 170, 173-74.

Pennsylvania state officials attempted to intervene after the war, they further exacerbated the situation by showing favoritism to Pennamites, and garrisoning troops from neighboring Northampton and Northumberland counties in the fort at Wilkes Barre. Enraged by what they perceived to be unfair treatment, the Connecticut Yankees assaulted Pennsylvania officials, igniting the Second Yankee-Pennamite War. Skirmishes over land, crops, and resources further aggravated the conflict which continued until the winter of 1784. Pennamite resistance was substantially broken at that point, and last of the Pennsylvania claimants withdrew to the south by the summer of 1785.⁶⁴

Emboldened by their victory, the Connecticut Yankees decided to reassert the Susquehannah Company claims and solidify their control over the region. A company meeting on July 13, 1785 created 600 new claims, amounting to 360,000 acres of Pennsylvania land, as well as 400 new half-shares of 300 acres each. The former were bought up by speculators, particularly New Yorkers from the border region between the Hudson River and Massachusetts. These grandees had sympathies for Ethan Allen's Vermont separatists, and likely supported a separatist agenda for the Wyoming country as well. Ethan Allen himself became a member of a four-person executive committee set up to decide land disputes between Connecticut claimants. The 400 half-shares were available to young men, or Wild Yankees, who were willing to submit to the orders of company agents. In the words of Timothy Pickering, who became a leading Federalist in Pennsylvania, the Wild Yankees were "the instruments of all the outrages" committed on Pennsylvania's northern frontier in the late 1780s. The *Connecticut Courant* described

⁶⁴ Moyer, "Wild Yankees," 50-88.

them as “a dangerous combination of villains, composed of runaway debtors, criminals, and adherents to Shays.”⁶⁵ Frontier violence continued until 1788, when the Wild Yankees kidnapped Timothy Pickering and held him prisoner for twenty days. Believing that the New York speculators had abandoned them, they let Pickering go, and resistance on the frontier subsided for the first time since the end of the war. Although farmers continued to raise crops in the valley throughout the protracted conflict, the region did not contribute much to the down-river trade, and was not a viable area for market development in terms of a return trade.⁶⁶

With land prices as low at 8 cents per acre in northern Pennsylvania in the early 1790s, and federal lands in the new Northwest Territory pegged at \$2 per acre, thousands of migrants flooded into northern Pennsylvania. The Connecticut Yankees encouraged the settlement of New Englanders, and gradually gained a stranglehold over local Pennsylvania politics. John Franklin, the leader of the Yankee resistance, served as Sheriff of Luzerne County between 1792 and 1796, Lieutenant Colonel of the county militia after 1793, and representative to the Pennsylvania assembly in 1795-1796, 1799, and 1800-1803. The state continued the struggle for control over the region and to gain compensation for displaced Pennamites, but the campaign against the Connecticut Yankees was largely carried forward through legal and legislative means. The Wyoming Valley finally achieved a degree of economic and political stability by the mid-1790s that had been missing. Wheat began descending the North Branch of the Susquehanna on arks, and much of the produce reached the market at Baltimore. Yet it was not until after

⁶⁵ Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, August 4, 1788, and *Connecticut Courant*, September 10, 1787, both quoted in Moyer, “Wild Yankees,” 105, 106-07.

⁶⁶ Moyer, “Wild Yankees,” 89-164.

1800 that a return trade would develop, and the region would become more fully integrated into the Atlantic economy.⁶⁷

THE REVIVAL OF OVERSEAS TRADE

The obstacles to developing markets in the backcountry were certainly steep, but they were not insurmountable. For even the most stubborn merchants like Paul Bentalou, who steadfastly clung to the smallest sliver of hope that his fortune would be made by trade on the seas, failure and insolvency would have been powerful inducements in forcing a change in his neomercantilist *mentalité*. For Bentalou, all his remaining hopes hinged on the success of the *Traveller*, the ship that his partner and brother-in-law, John Dumeste, had taken to the Mascarene Islands in a desperate last gamble to save the firm. Failure would have represented a life-altering event. Yet when the *Traveller* finally arrived in Baltimore in November 1788, Bentalou's faith in overseas trade was restored in full. The venture turned out to be a tremendous success—the first truly good news for his struggling firm in more than four years. Bentalou's modest one-sixteenth share in the venture yielded a substantial profit, and proved more than enough to satisfy his creditors in the short-run. He had managed to buy needed time to slowly climb out of the abyss of his debts. John Clark, the merchant who had helped finance Bentalou's share in the voyage, was so impressed the success of the voyage that he outfitted the *Traveller* and the ship *Betsy* to return to the French islands at once with tobacco and other goods “thought best to answer that market.” Dumeste's brother supplied a substantial loan to Dumeste and Bentalou, enabling the firm to receive a three-sixteenths share in the *Betsy*. In

⁶⁷ Moyer, “Wild Yankees,” 165-202, and Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 195-213.

February 1789, Clark's two vessels departed from Baltimore with Dumeste on board.

Once again, Bentalou was forced to wait.⁶⁸

Pending his partner's return, Bentalou decided "to live as economically as possible," and thus retired with his wife "to a garden we then had . . . and accommodated ourselves as well as . . . we could in a very small house." Over the next two years, Bentalou was mightily harassed by his creditors, but in May 1791, the *Betsy* finally returned. The *Traveller* had been sold, along with its cargo at Mozambique, and Dumeste had remained in Ile de France in the Mascarenes. The voyage was not a failure, but its success fell "far short of our expectations" according to Bentalou, and the *Betsy* had arrived in very poor condition. Yet Clark remained impressed with the commercial possibilities on the French islands, and outfitted the ship *Sally* for a return voyage. Despite Bentalou's own complaints, the profits from his interest in the *Betsy* were enough to finance a one-fourth interest in the *Sally*. With a proven commercial connection now established with the French colonies in the Indian Ocean, Bentalou's fortunes and prospects improved over the next few years. Saved from insolvency, any thoughts that he might have entertained about developing the backcountry faded away.⁶⁹

Bentalou's successes in the Indian Ocean trade were repeated in the East Indies and China by other merchants. As early as December 1783, Boston merchants financed an ambitious scheme to send the tiny 40-ton sloop *Harriet* to Canton by way of the Cape of Good Hope. Not much bigger than a yacht, the *Harriet* nonetheless left Hingham, Massachusetts for China with a cargo of ginseng. Ultimately, Captain Hallet, the

⁶⁸ November 1787 to February 1788, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

⁶⁹ February 1788 to May 1791, Paul Bentalou Journal, MHS.

commander of the *Harriet*, did not allow hubris to cloud his own good sense, and he decided against making the hazardous journey around the Cape. Outside of Cape Town, the *Harriet* encountered a huge British East Indiaman carrying a cargo of black tea. Hallet exchanged his ginseng for the tea and returned home. The venture yielded more than \$30,000, or a 30 percent profit for the ship's backers, but the *Harriet* did not become the first American ship to reach China. That distinction fell upon the *Empress of China*, a large 368-ton ship built in Massachusetts and far better-suited for the journey around the Cape. Loaded with brandy, wine, and ginseng, the ship left New York on February 22, 1784 and arrived on August 28 at Canton's Whampoa anchorage, fourteen miles south of the city. The American vessel remained in port four months, disposing of its cargo and taking on 328,000 pounds of black tea, 75,000 pounds of green tea, 130,000 pounds of chinaware, 3,200 pounds of nankeen, 2,800 pounds of cassia, and several hundred pieces of silk for the return trip. Thomas Randall, who represented the interests of the mercantile houses in the voyage, also chartered a second ship, the *Pallas*, to carry \$50,000 in black tea and several hundred pieces of porcelain. The *Empress of China* arrived safely in New York on May 10, 1785, while the *Pallas* was directed to Baltimore. The American trade to the Indian Ocean, the East Indies, and China grew quickly, and by 1800, more than a hundred American vessels cleared Canton for American ports.⁷⁰

The trade around the Cape of Good Hope represented a bright spot for the republic in an otherwise dreary period, but the commerce there was not significant

⁷⁰ John Scofield, *Hail, Columbia: Robert Gray, John Kendrick and the Pacific Fur Trade* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1993), 28-32, and Arrell Morgan Gibson and John Whitehead, *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 94-101, 172-73. Nankkeen is a coarse cotton cloth, while cassia is an inferior form of cinnamon. A person who represented the interests of the mercantile houses in the voyage was known as the supercargo.

enough to make up for the dismal state of Atlantic trade as well. By the late 1780s, however, commerce with Europe and the West Indies began to revive. A number of short harvests, especially in France in 1789, ended the postwar glut in the international grain market, creating an increased demand for American produce. Few places faced the danger of scarcity because American supplies were able to make up the shortfalls on the continent, thus prices continued to stagnate. Nevertheless, the number of barrels of flour exported from Baltimore increased from 72,000 in 1785 to 200,000 in 1792, allowing the value of the city's flour exports to rise steadily. After bottoming out in 1787 at \$245,000, the value of Baltimore's flour trade to the West Indies climbed to \$626,000 in 1792, and the combined value of the city's flour exports to the West Indies and Europe topped \$1 million for the first time in 1790. Imports from England to the Chesapeake continued to decline, reaching a postwar low of £656,000 in 1788. However, the resurgence in the export trade enabled Marylanders to begin paying off their debts, and this permitted imports to rebound in 1789. Imports from England to the Chesapeake topped £1.2 million in 1790, and surpassed £1.4 million in 1791. Robert Oliver certainly prospered during the early years of the commercial revival. By mid-1793, his capital in the firm Thompson and Oliver had increased from £3,336 in March 1789 to £8,741. Unlike the mid-1780s, when most of his profits derived from the commission business and shop ownership, Oliver built his fortune on exports. The pattern of his overseas ventures had not changed; the firm continued trading in Tobago, St. Croix, Martinique, and Jamaica in the West Indies, and L'Orient, Marseilles and Cadiz in Europe. What had changed was the market conditions in the Atlantic economy, which now favored American produce for the first time since the end of the Revolutionary War.⁷¹

⁷¹ Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean*, 66, 86-87, 126-27; *Historical Statistics of*

The prospects for American commerce brightened still further with the onset of the Wars of the French Revolution. Since the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, the French National Assembly had moved quickly to curb the power of the Church by subordinating the clergy to the state. This led to a series of increasingly apoplectic condemnations by Pope Pius VI against the French Revolution, and growing agitation among European princes to restore absolute monarchy. In France, both the people and the politicians believed the country was surrounded by jealous enemies, and the clamor for war reached deafening proportions. On April 21, 1792, King Louis XVI responded to the popular will by issuing, with the unanimous consent of the assembly, a declaration of war against Austria. Louis XVI hoped to avoid war with the German states, but Prussia honored its treaty with Emperor Francis II of Austria. The Comte de Rochambeau, who had been in overall command of French forces in North America during the American Revolution, commanded the French invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. Rochambeau's initial campaign went poorly, but French armies proved victorious at Valmy in September against the Prussians under Duke of Brunswick. The engagement was largely confined to a long, drawn-out artillery duel in which the advantages possessed by the disciplined Prussian army regulars over the French citizen-soldiers were neutralized. Goethe, who witnessed the historic battle, concluded that a new era of world history began when the eminent Prussian army retreated in defeat. The National Assembly agreed. Emboldened by victory, France declared war against Great Britain and the Netherlands in February 1793, and against Spain the following month. By summer,

the United States, II, 1176; and Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 74-76. For the United States as a whole, the low-point for both imports from and exports to England came in 1786. Imports increased from £1.4 million in 1786 to more than £4 million in 1791, while exports increased from £743,000 in 1786 to more than £1 million in 1791.

France was at war with every major European country except Russia.⁷²

The expansion of the war in Europe was good news for American prospects in the Atlantic trade. The French National Convention realized that the commerce of the French Empire would be immediately imperiled by the war with Great Britain, and in February 1793, the Convention reversed the *arrêts* of the 1780s. All French ports in the West Indies, the East Indies, and the Mascarene Islands were thereby opened to American ships. Although the British Parliament did not take similar action, colonial governors in the British West Indies issued special concessions to American ships on an almost continual basis after 1793, effectively nullifying the Orders in Council of the 1780s. The one remaining threat to American trade was seizure by French and British warships, because both imperial powers adopted measures to interdict against neutral vessels carrying goods destined for the ports of the other empire. On May 9, the National Convention authorized the seizure of neutrals carrying provisions to any British port. The decree violated the terms of France's 1778 treaty with the United States, however, and the Convention decided to issue an exemption on May 23 for American ships. The exemption was repealed on May 28, re-instated on July 1, and repealed for the second and last time on July 27. Thereafter, American ships bound for British ports were liable to seizure under French law. The British Parliament was not similarly plagued by indecision. Orders in Council of June 8 and November 6, 1793 authorized the seizure of all neutral ships carrying provisions to France, and the seizure of any neutral ship carrying goods from a French colony. In the months that followed, the Royal Navy seized 600 ships, including 250 American vessels, of which 150 were condemned by

⁷² Owen Connelly, *French Revolution, Napoleonic Era* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 96-101, 114-18, 124-26, 131.

British Vice Admiralty Courts. The foul treatment of American ships earned censure from the U.S. government, and on January 8, 1794, the Orders in Council were revised to allow only for the seizure of neutral ships carrying goods from the French West Indies directly to Europe, or carrying French property from the French colonies to any port. American property carried in American ships to French ports were no longer liable to seizure.⁷³

When the British revised the Orders in Council in 1794, the decision created the opportunity for American merchants to engage in a re-export trade using the concept of a “broken voyage.” When a vessel arrived from the West Indies, merchants attempted to sell as much of the cargo in America. When the market for the product in America became exhausted, the produce could then be legally re-exported to Europe as American, rather than French property. This enabled merchants to circumvent both the British and French restrictions on neutral vessels, and allowed American trade to grow immensely. Chief among American re-exports were sugar and coffee, the two most important cash crops in the West Indies. After 1783, coffee exports from the West Indies had rocketed, with Santo Domingo accounting for half of all French coffee imports by the end of the decade. By the latter 1780s, the trade encompassed colonies throughout the western hemisphere, including Brazil, Venezuela, and Curaçao, a small Dutch possession off the South American coast. Yet Americans were slow to realize the opportunities presented by the thriving coffee trade, importing only 4 million pounds in 1791. This situation changed with the opening of the re-export market.⁷⁴

⁷³ Anna Clauder, *American Commerce As Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812* (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), 9, 11, 27-34.

⁷⁴ Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân

With coffee prices high and profits at least 30 to 40 percent greater than on sugar, merchants seized on the trend with a furor. American coffee imports escalated to 34 million pounds in 1793, and 61 million pounds in 1796, an amount that exceeded the gross weight of sugar imported that year. Although the legal concept of a “broken voyage” dictated that a reasonable period of time needed to elapse before American merchants could lawfully re-export products to Europe, coffee prices in Europe, rather than the letter of the law, usually dictated the timing for re-export. A period of four to six months would often pass before a merchant decided to load unsold cargo onto a ship for an Atlantic crossing. Most of this product was re-exported to Europe, but the United States also provided a burgeoning market. Thanks in large part to the coffee and sugar trade from the West Indies, the value of re-exports from the United States surged from less than \$1 million in 1791 to \$26 million in 1796.⁷⁵

Direct exports also remained important for American trade, and particularly for Baltimore. With most of the continent at war, demand for American wheat, flour, and

Reynolds (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 256-60, and *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 902. Coffee beans first reached European markets from Arabia around 1615 and became a sensation in France during the 1670s. Coffee remained largely unknown to colonial British Americans until planters introduced the coffee shrub to the West Indies during the 1720s. Production began first on the islands of Cayenne, Santo Domingo, Martinique, and Jamaica, and coffeehouses soon began appearing in the mainland British colonies by mid-century. Merchants found the new establishments convenient places to exchange valuable commercial information, adding to the growing trade in the bean. Yet the popularity of coffee in the British American colonies can be easily overstated; tea remained the preferred beverage through the Revolutionary period.

⁷⁵ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 886, 902, and Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 237-38. The relative profitability of coffee and sugar imports are difficult to determine because of a lack of sources. However, there is some anecdotal evidence. In June 1797, Robert Oliver expected to make a profit of \$23,662 if his ship *Harmony* carried only sugar, and a profit of \$33,600 if the ship carried an equal amount of only coffee. He anticipated paying three to four cents a pound for the sugar, and eight to nine cents a pound for coffee, however, which suggests that the actual market price for coffee may have been 75 to 125 percent greater than for sugar. Oliver decided to import sugar anyway, and was disappointed with the results. See Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 178-

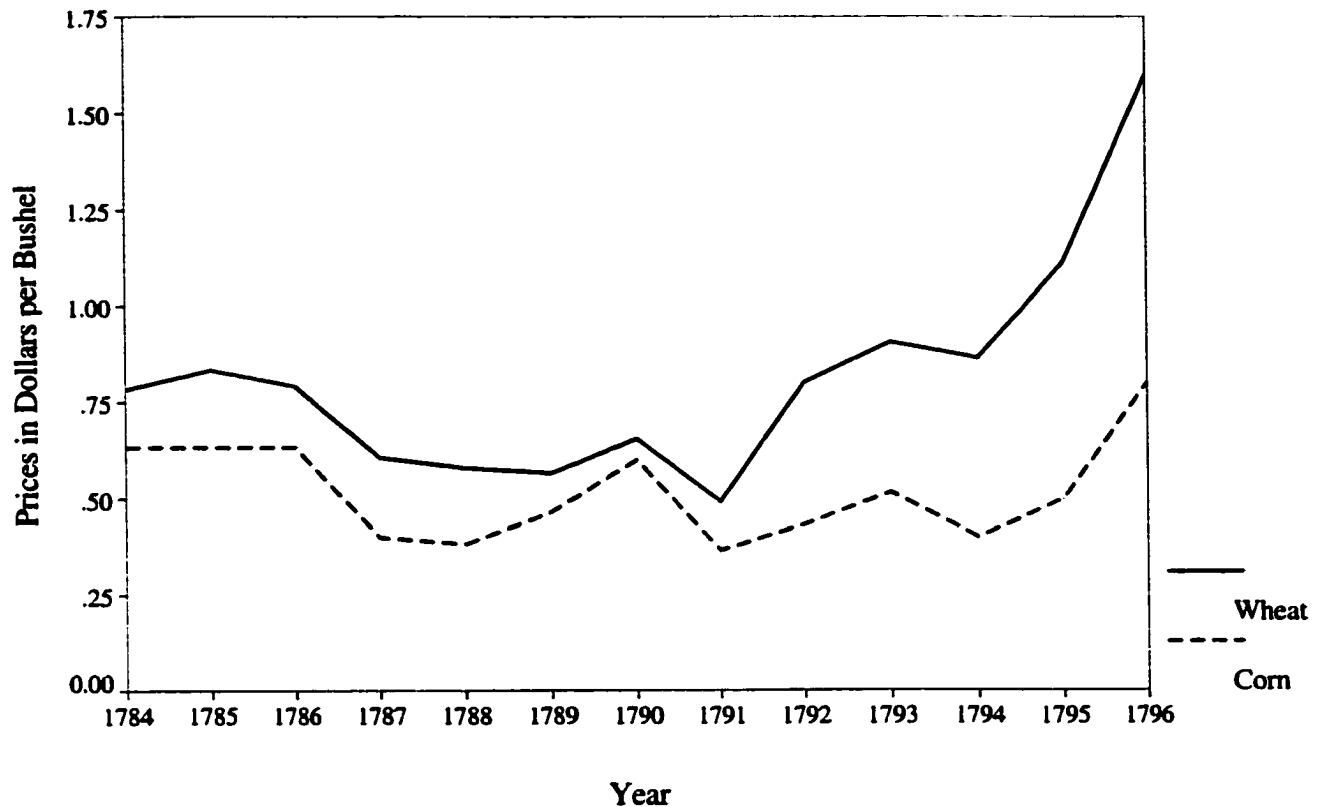
corn increased once again. Yet the conflict also made it increasingly difficult to provision the European markets or the British and French West Indies. Flour exports from Baltimore to Europe fell from 115,000 barrels in 1793 to just 23,000 barrels in 1796, and flour exports from Baltimore to the British and French West Indies declined from 109,000 barrels in 1792 to 79,000 barrels in 1796. Although flour exports to the Dutch, Danish, Spanish and Swedish islands doubled from 15,000 to 31,000 barrels between 1792 and 1796, the increased supply to these islands was not enough to make up for the shortfall. Overall flour exports from Baltimore declined from 220,000 barrels in 1793 to just 133,000 in 1796. Yet the decline in the volume of exports was not detrimental to the city's commerce. With short harvests in France and the American trade impeded, Europe faced food scarcities. As seen in Figure 3-2, commodity prices appreciated for the first time since the end of the Revolutionary War. In Maryland, the price of corn rose from 36½ cents to 80 cents per bushel between 1791 and 1796, and the price of wheat rose from 80 cents to \$1.60 per bushel over the same period. American wholesale prices doubled on farm produce, and increased by more than 50 percent for all goods. As seen in Figure 3-3, the number of barrels of flour exported from Baltimore declined, but the inflation in prices allowed the value of city's flour trade to surpass \$1 million in 1792, and reach almost \$1.7 million in 1796. For the United States as a whole, the value of direct exports increased from \$19 million to \$32 million between 1791 and 1796.⁷⁶

79.

⁷⁶ Donald Adams, Jr., "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," *Journal of Economic History*, 46 (1986): 644; Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean*, 127; and *Historical Statistics of the United States*, I, 202, 205, and II. 886.

Figure 3-2

Mid-Atlantic Grain Prices, 1784-1796

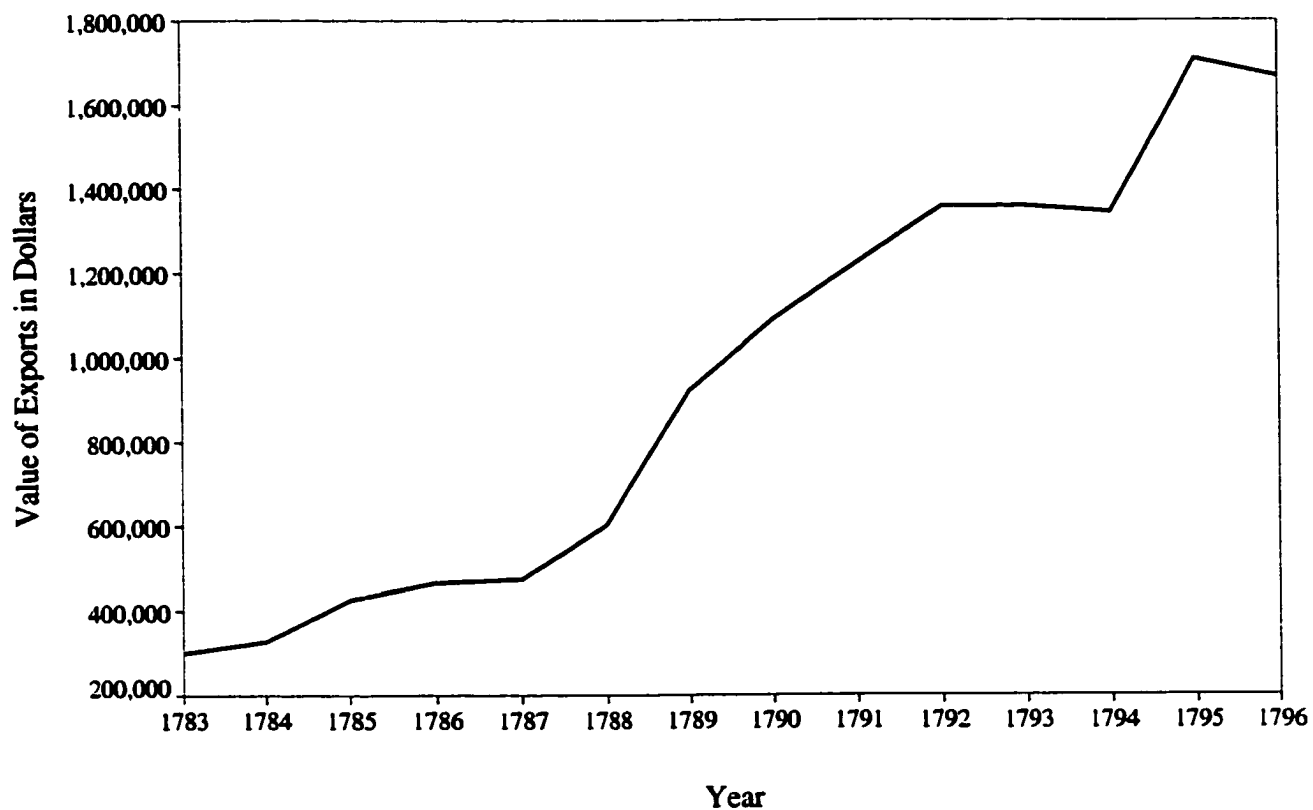


Source: Donald Adams, Jr., "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," *Journal of Economic History*, 46 (1986): 644.

Note: Missing data on wheat prices was extrapolated using George Warren and Frank Pearson's wholesale price index and Anne Bezanson's wholesale price index in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), I, 202, 205.

Figure 3-3

Value of Flour Exported from Baltimore, 1783-1796



Source: Geoffrey Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean, 1750-1815* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 127.

The Wars of the French Revolution also enabled American merchants to recapture the nation's carrying trade. In 1791, Lord Hawkesbury of Britain's Committee of Trade issued a report stating that by the late 1780s, 75 percent of the foreign clearances from Charleston, 80 percent of the foreign entrances to Philadelphia, 98 percent of the foreign tonnage in New York, including 40 percent of all the tonnage for the port, was carried in British bottoms. Indeed, foreign ships accounted for approximately 40 percent of all the tonnage in the American trade. By 1796, however, the tonnage for American ships nearly doubled to 700,000, while the tonnage for foreign ships plummeted from more than 300,000 to less than 50,000. Thanks to the increased demand for American produce in Europe, rising prices on grain and almost every other commodity, and increased American control over the carrying trade, overall U.S. exports, including direct exports and re-exports, more than tripled between 1791 and 1796 from \$19 million to \$59 million.⁷⁷

The wartime boom was good news for Baltimore merchant Robert Oliver, who prospered like never before. Opportunities were so great that his firm actually refused to engage in the commission business, sinking all available time, capital, and energy into the export trade. The decision paid off. Between mid-1793 and January 28, 1795, Oliver and Thompson realized profits of £111,898, allowing Oliver to increase his capital in the firm from £8,741 to over £67,000. Even when the firm faced problems they made

⁷⁷ Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 31-32; Clauder, *American Commerce*, 25; and *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 886. Douglass North's estimates for exports during this period were higher than those of the Department of Commerce. North states that re-exports amounted to \$500,000 in 1791 and increased to \$26 million by 1796, while direct exports expanded from \$18½ million in 1791 to \$41 million in 1796. Thus total exports more than tripled between 1791 and 1796, from \$19 million to \$67 million. See Douglass North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 221.

money. On January 28, 1795, Oliver reported losses of £32,000 on goods seized by the British, and this number swelled to £60,000 by 1799. However, these were book losses. Once a cargo was condemned, the British sold off the goods at what Oliver considered below market price, though usually not at prices below cost. Oliver's accounts for January 28, 1795 thus showed net revenues on his seized cargoes amounting to £17,000. Furthermore, Oliver eventually received the market price for most of his seized goods when British courts began reversing the decisions of the Vice Admiralty courts. In one case of the brig *Bacchus*, the firm actually received compensation in excess of the claimed losses of £8,000. The court found in favor of Oliver and Thompson, and awarded them £5,881 in addition to the £2,125 they had already been paid—a total compensation of £8,006. Oliver observed that “instead of plundering us,” the British had ultimately plundered “their own nation.”⁷⁸

With the export trade booming, the neomercantilist assumptions that had guided American thinking about the nation's economy were preserved. There was little reason to invest in anything other than overseas trade, and thus most of the major schemes unhatched in the mid-1780s to improve inland transportation languished during the 1790s for lack of capital. After completing just 15 miles of the canal between the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Rivers at a cost of \$440,000, work was suspended on the project in 1795. The construction turnpike between Philadelphia and Lancaster was completed by 1794, but this transportation improvement fell short of reaching the Susquehanna River and western Pennsylvania beyond. In Maryland and Virginia, land speculation along the

⁷⁸ Robert Oliver to Timothy Pickering, April 29, 1799, quoted in Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 91. For Oliver and Thompson's success in the export trade in the mid-1790s, see Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 80-96.

Potomac and unpaid stock subscriptions helped delay improvements on the Potomac river. By the turn of the century, the Potomac company had not opened its first locks, and work on the canal linking the Chesapeake to the Susquehanna River had not even commenced.⁷⁹ As long as commerce continued to flourish, the neomercantilist *mentalité* could continue indefinitely. The full implementation of Adam Smith's theories of political economy would have to wait.

⁷⁹ Shaw, *Canals for a Nation*, 4-9. The Potomac Company opened its first lock in 1802, and work on the Chesapeake-Susquehanna canal finally began in 1801.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERSISTENCE OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

No one in the republic planned to welcome the new Federal Constitution in a more stately fashion than Captain Joshua Barney. The Revolutionary war hero proposed the construction of a miniature ship to lead a parade through the city's streets to mark Maryland's ratification of the new national plan of government. Baltimore's shipwrights leapt on the idea and built the *Federalist*, a fifteen-foot-long, fully-rigged ship mounted on four wheels and drawn by four horses. Barney became the unofficial grand marshal of Baltimore's celebration, commanding the *Federalist* and its crew, which consisted of the city's leading ship captains. To the delight of the crowd, which reportedly numbered four thousand, Barney and his crew went through the motions of sailing the miniature ship as it was drawn through the city's streets. The procession passed through Fells Point to Old Town, then across Jones Falls into Baltimore Town. Barney finally dropped anchor on the high banks southwest of the Basin—a place that Baltimoreans have known ever since as Federal Hill in honor of the constitutional fete. A bonfire and fireworks followed the parade, and the celebration was capped off by the launching of the *Federalist* into the harbor. Barney navigated the miniature vessel down the Patapsco to the Chesapeake Bay, then up the Potomac River to Mount Vernon, where he presented the ship on behalf of the proud citizens of Baltimore to George Washington, the presumptive first President of the United States. Washington was greatly pleased by the gesture, calling the vessel a “beautiful curiosity,” and expressing the hope that Maryland's actions would not “be without its due efficacy on the minds of their neighbors.” The celebrated event indeed caught the imagination of others around the republic. When New York ratified the

constitution in July, New Yorkers copied Baltimore's pageantry by building their own miniature ship and parading it down Broadway.¹

Although the *Federalist* was the most spectacular part of the Baltimore parade, other aspects of the celebration revealed more about the social and economic structure of Baltimore at the end of the 1780s. Trailing behind Barney's miniature ship were the city's artisans, organized by occupation. They carried banners representing their individual trades and trumpeting their support for the new federal constitution. The theatrical display recalled a well-worn custom of traditional society. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, British artisans emblazoned the symbols of their trades onto furniture, buildings, and clothing, and carried banners with those symbols during civic festivities like the annual procession on the Lord Mayor's Day in London. In the colonies though, artisans sought to reproduce the metropolitan standards set by their London counterparts, but the craft trades were never sufficiently organized to produce a spectacle like the procession on the Lord Mayor's Day.² Thus the banners streaming through Baltimore's streets in 1788 represented a powerful symbol of how many of the institutions and rhythms of colonial life had passed through the Revolution

¹ John Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore; Being a Complete History of "Baltimore Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1874), 249-50, and George Washington to William Smith and others, of Baltimore, June 8, 1788, quoted in Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 250-51. In familiar fashion for New York, its ship, the *Hamilton*, was larger than Baltimore's miniature. An exact copy of a 32-gun frigate, it was twenty-seven feet long, fully rigged, and drawn by ten horses.

² Howard Rock, "'All Her Sons Join as One Social Band': New York City's Artisanal Societies in the Early Republic," *American Artisans: Crafting Social Identity, 1750-1850*, ed. Howard Rock, Paul Gilje, and Robert Asher (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 156-60. For the origins and development of artisanal participation in civic festivities in London, see also William Kahl, *The Development of the London Livery Companies* (Cambridge, MA: Baker Library, 1960), and George Unwin, *Gilds and Companies of London* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908).

unscathed. Instead of moving away from the English standard in the wake of the Revolution, American artisans had actually edged closer to it. Despite the attack on the symbolic familial authority of the King over the colonies, the actual familial authority of artisans over workers remained very firmly intact. The persistence of traditional society was apparent elsewhere too, in the continued dominance of husbands over wives and slaveholders over the enslaved.

In an age of republicanism, the continuation of traditional patterns of social and economic control is quite surprising. The Revolutionary generation condemned economic dependence, denounced social deference, and censured arbitrary power, yet it was these three core values that sustained apprenticeship, patriarchy, and slavery. Instead of abolishing them, the Revolutionary generation defended apprenticeship, slavery and patriarchy, and in some ways even strengthened them after the Revolution. The persistence of these traditional institutions represents the most profound contradiction of post-Revolutionary America. Having reached a consensus that “all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,” the Founding Fathers then refused to recognize the universality of these universal principles. The central features of American life remained at odds with the primary ideological precepts of the American Revolution—a hypocrisy which was not lost upon apprentices, women, or the enslaved.³

³ The literature on the radicalization of apprentices, women, and the enslaved during the Revolutionary period is vast. See especially W. J. Rorabaugh, “‘I Thought I Should Liberate Myself from the Thralldom of Others’: Apprentices, Masters, and the Revolution,” in *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred Young (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 185-217; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1980); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Sylvia Frey,

To justify oppression in its many forms, distinctions had to be drawn between people to account for the exclusion of some part of the public from full participation in the polity. In this charged political environment, those who defended the continuation of apprenticeship, patriarchy, and slavery invoked spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and even biological arguments to rationalize the institutions. One of the most persuasive arguments, however, was a fundamentally economic one that revealed the degree to which the traditional social order relied on the persistence of the household economy. In 1801, a frustrated husband and father, writing under the name Hyperion, provided the essence of this argument in a letter to the *Mercury and New-England Palladium*. He complained “nothing was more dangerous to the rights of man,” than when the rights of women and children “took possession in the *home department*.”⁴ The vitality of society rested on the mutual acceptance of universal obligations and duties within the household, not the extension of universal rights to all people. When apprentices, wives, or the enslaved refused to recognize their prescribed responsibilities within the household, all suffered. Hyperion’s defense of the traditional social structure drew a sharp distinction between the rights of property owning free white men and those of all others. As

Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁴ “Hyperion,” *Mercury and New-England Palladium*, August 18, 1801, quoted in Rosemarie Zagarri, “The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 55 (1998): 219. The literature on the limits of Revolutionary ideology is extensive. In addition to Zagarri, see especially Christopher Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Ideology in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 223-97; Joan Hoff Wilson, “The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution,” in *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, 383-445; and Elaine Forman Crane, “Dependence in the Era of Independence: The Role of Women in a Republican Society,” in *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits*, ed. Jack Greene (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 253-75.

historian Rosemarie Zagarri has argued, white men used this distinction “to expand their political rights and challenge social privilege,” while at the same time, “legitimate current social arrangements.”⁵ Contemporary critics found this argument difficult to overcome. Even Mary Wollstonecraft, who favored a revolution in female manners to expand the economic opportunities of single women and widows, ultimately retreated into the sanctity of the household economy regarding the education of wives and mothers. According to Wollstonecraft, better education for women would produce better companions for men and better nurturers for children, not a new class of female professionals.

The strength of the household economy was thus an important key, and perhaps the most important key to the persistence of traditional society, and three legacies of the colonial and Revolutionary periods helped sustain and strengthen the household economy in the early republic. First, few artisans faced the extreme financial hardships endured by many of the city’s merchants and shopkeepers during the Confederation. Many discovered that their workshops were somewhat insulated from the commercial troubles of the 1780s. Industries that had benefited the most from the wartime economy were forced to make peacetime adjustments, but political independence created unexpected economic opportunities for much of the artisan community. During the colonial period, British mercantilist policies dictated what Americans could and could not produce, based upon the needs of the British Empire rather than economic potential of the colonies. After the break with Great Britain, artisans were free to produce a broad range of articles previously forbidden under British law. Although indebtedness to British merchants and

⁵ Zagarri, “The Rights of Man and Woman,” 223.

the decline in consumer spending in the mid-1780s were certainly problems, freedom from Britain's imperial mandates enabled many artisans to weather the hard times of the 1780s, and then prosper as never before during the 1790s.

A second legacy of the Revolution was the rise of organized political activity among artisans. During the 1760s and 1770s, resistance to British authority helped galvanize the artisan community to become more politically active. In the years following the Revolution, trade associations, much like those organized by artisans across the Atlantic, emerged throughout America. During the 1780s, these associations enabled artisans to pursue a range of political and economic objectives, all of which were designed to strengthen the household economy and the traditional social order. The activities of these associations proved especially important in stabilizing the household economy for those industries facing economic hardship during the Confederation. By the 1790s, trade associations enabled artisans to form a powerful political interest within Baltimore that played a significant role in shaping the city's political future.

The emergence of a strong, independent artisan faction could have upset the neomercantilist balance between the maritime and household economies. However, a third legacy of the Revolution was that artisans and merchants had worked together to overthrow British rule. In the wake of the war, merchants and artisans shared the same neomercantilist outlook. The two groups tussled over many political issues during the 1780s and 1790s, and at times the quarrels between them were quite embittered. Yet most of the debates were over details and not direction. Both groups had a vested interest in maintaining the prevailing social and economic order. Although tedious at times, the coalition of interests between merchants and artisans continued in the post-war years,

helping prop up the traditional social order.

THE POST-WAR HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

As much as any other occupational group within the city, artisans benefited from the infusion of foreign specie into the port during the war, and the subsequent buying spree which immediately followed the cessation of hostilities. Business revived, and many laborers who would have normally joined the ranks of the privateers decided to remain within the city to take advantage of high wages. Despite the euphoria, however, industries which profited from the wartime economy still confronted the problem of post-war readjustment. The shipbuilding trades were among those affected. The formal adoption of the Treaty of Paris ended legal privateering, and neither the Congress nor Maryland's new state government were prepared to subsidize naval establishments during peacetime. Robert Morris, Congress's Agent of Marine, decided to sell all the remaining ships in the Continental navy except the 32-gun frigate *Alliance*, the fleet's only copper-bottomed vessel. Some members in Congress hoped to retain the ship as a reminder of the navy's role in securing the nation's independence. When hard times struck the republic, however, the vessel's fate was sealed. On August 1, 1785, the *Alliance* was auctioned off for \$26,000 at Merchants' Coffee House in Philadelphia, ending the federal government's support for the naval establishment.⁶ With the loss of these two sources of revenue, the demand for new ship construction collapsed and shipwrights could no longer expect to make the enormous profits possible during wartime.

⁶ Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974), 521, and Richard Buel, *In Irons: Britain's Naval Supremacy and the American Revolutionary Economy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 94.

Shipbuilding continued to decline in the 1780s thanks to the revival of European mercantilist restrictions on trade, but the city's shipyards did not close down. As long as traffic continued to enter and clear from the port, there were ships in need of repair and refit. Thanks to the growing importance of the coastal trade as well as ventures like Bentalou's and Dumeste's the Indian Ocean and beyond, the total number of entrances to and clearances from Baltimore continued to climb throughout the decade. The city's shipyards were therefore never at a loss for business. David Stodder, a shipbuilder who had removed from Virginia to Baltimore during the Revolution, was the most adept at shifting the focus of his yard from construction to maintenance of the existing merchant marine, and his yard expanded enormously during the Confederation years.⁷ To the city's carpenters, caulkers, riggers, sailmakers, and ropemakers working on Baltimore's docks and wharves, it did not matter if the ships entering the port were of foreign registry, or if their voyages had been profitable for the owners. As long as ships sailed into port in need of service, these workers enjoyed steady employment. Not every shipwright had the foresight to make the change, enough did so that the shipbuilding trades as a whole were not injured by the reversals of fortune in the Atlantic trade. The disparity between mercantile and artisanal prospects was not lost on the city's merchants. George Johonnot bristled at the wages earned by the city's ship carpenters. He complained that Baltimore could not boast of a single talented ship carpenter, all "those here [being] mere botchers,"

⁷ Rhoda Dorsey, "The Pattern of Baltimore Commerce during the Confederation Period," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 62 (1967): 119-34. To the extent that household size and the number of enslaved workers is an indication of economic expansion, Stodder's yard nearly tripled. In 1783, his household consisted of 19 individuals, including 12 enslaved workers. By 1790, his household numbered 52, including 25 enslaved workers. See Tina Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town, 1765-1790" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), 224-25.

and he marveled at how those producing such poor quality work nevertheless earned “such wages as raises their fortunes in a few years.” Henry Johnson, Johonnot’s partner, concluded that the ship carpenters were “so extravagant in their demands” that the high cost of labor made it “impossible for them [shipwrights] to attempt to build” new ships. Although their analysis of the lack of new ship construction may have been faulty, Johnson’s and Johonnot’s observations do reveal the prosperous circumstances of those working on the wharves and docks during the Confederation.⁸

Artisans engaged in the preparation of commodities for export also prospered during the 1780s thanks to the neomercantilist reliance on trade. As long as merchants kept sinking capital into foreign commerce, whether or not the voyages proved profitable, wheat had to be milled into flour, flour had to be packed into barrels, and barrels had to be carted to the docks. The need for these services meant steady employment for the city’s millers, bakers, coopers, and carters. Other trades also overcame the problems of post-war readjustment. The expansion of British textile and iron production in the last two decades of the eighteenth century effectively eliminated the nascent American industries that had developed during the war. Like the shipbuilding trades, however, the textile trades were able to expand and prosper by shifting the focus of the industry from production to service. Baltimore had few cloth producers, but the city supported a growing population of hatters, seamstresses, and tailors. Hatters reaped an additional economic advantage from political independence because they were no longer bound by

⁸ George Johonnot to Noah Parker, May 29, 1784, and Johnson, Johonnot, and Co. [Henry Johnson] to Noah Parker, February 21, 1784, both in Johnson, Johonnot, and Co. Letterbook, MS.499, MHS.

the terms of Britain's 1732 Hat Act.⁹

In the metal forging trades, capital also shifted from a production-oriented to a more service-oriented economy. The eclipse of the 1750 Iron Act hurt American production of pig iron because the commodity was no longer admitted duty-free in London.¹⁰ In the 1780s, Maryland's iron production declined to just 33 percent of its pre-war levels. Only two of Baltimore's five ironworks in operation in 1776 were still in business by 1786, and of these, Charles Carroll's Baltimore Company Ironworks had ceased its operations. The iron-rich deposits in the area of the Patapsco went largely untapped, and thus it is accurate to conclude that the Revolution retarded the domestic iron industry in terms of the production of pig iron and steel. Yet the city's blacksmiths, nailmakers, and tinsmiths prospered during the Confederation as production of basic tools, nails, and tinware increased. By 1789, Christopher and Robert Johnston, Andrew Van Bibber, Richardson Stuart, Adam Fonerden, and John Dorsey had invested in four new nail manufactories located either in Baltimore or in the city's immediate area.¹¹

If the commercial frustrations of the 1780s had persisted, artisans would have eventually faced declining fortunes along with the merchants. As long as Baltimore remained primarily an entrepot, the household economy would have been irreparably hurt in the long-term by the stagnation of the maritime economy. Yet commerce did revive by the late 1780s, and with the onset of the Wars of the French Revolution in the 1790s, Baltimore's artisans grew in both numbers and wealth. Even industries like construction

⁹ 5 George II c.22 in *Statutes of the Realm*. See the discussion in chapter one.

¹⁰ 23 George II c.29 in *Statutes of the Realm*. See the discussion in chapter one.

¹¹ Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 228-39.

that were fully depressed experienced an economic revival. After the post-war building frenzy collapsed in 1785, brickmakers, carpenters, joiners, plasterers, and painters struggled through the middle part of the decade. By the late 1780s, however, these artisans witnessed a renewed building boom needed to accommodate the city's surging population. In the 1790s, Baltimore's population nearly doubled from 13,503 to 26,514. The city's average annual increase of 1,301 people was almost twice the city's rate of population growth during the previous decade, and was greater than either Boston's or Philadelphia's rate of growth during the 1790s. New York City's rate of population growth surpassed Baltimore in absolute terms, but not in percentage terms.¹²

To accommodate the swelling population, builders and landowners favored construction of brick rowhouses, and it was during the late 1780s and early 1790s that brick rowhouses with washed, white marble steps began to dominate Baltimore's residential neighborhoods. Although a common feature in most other Atlantic coast cities, the rowhouse became a particular symbol of Baltimore's growth, and the white marble steps became a cultural trademark of the city well into the twentieth century. Builders preferred rowhouses because they were less costly to build. Landowners favored rowhouses because it maximized the number of people who had to pay them ground rents.¹³ As early as 1793, James Kent, a New Yorker visiting Baltimore, commented that the city "is built chiefly of brick. Its Houses are 3-story—join[ed]

¹² First Census of the United States: Population, Maryland, 1790 (hereafter referred to 1790 Maryland Census), and Second Census of the United States: Population, Maryland, 1800 (hereafter referred to 1800 Maryland Census), both at National Archives.

¹³ The collection of ground rents was an old English custom, and thus another hold-over of traditional society. When landowners sold off a rowhouse for a profit, they still retained the rights to the ground on which the structure was located. This entitled them to a small, but regular, annual rent. See Robert Alexander, "Baltimore Row Houses of the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Studies*, 16 (1975): 68.

together—are wide, & the Town appears to be better and more handsomely built than Philadelphia.” The 1798 Direct Tax validated Kent’s observations, showing that 64 percent of the buildings in the downtown area of the city were brick, and most of them were rowhouses. Of the 3,508 buildings assessed throughout the city, including 653 outbuildings, almost half were made of brick. The enormous increase in the number of buildings was matched only by swelling numbers of those engaged in the construction trades. The 1800 city directory listed 235 carpenters, the largest artisanal occupational group in the city, including 52 people who identified themselves specifically as house carpenters. The city also supported 15 brickmakers, more than 60 painters, plasterers, and joiners, as well as hundreds of day laborers and bricklayers not listed in the city directory.¹⁴

The luxury trades also benefited from the booming, commerce-driven economy of the 1790s. During the Confederation, the number of Baltimore artisans employed in luxury trades had grown only slightly. These artisans had survived by catering to a broad range of services instead of specializing in one craft. Goldsmiths doubled as jewelers, and welcomed work in silver, copper, and, at times, even brass. The city was simply not yet able to support a large group of luxury craftsmen. After the revival of overseas trade, the boom times of the 1790s created many new opportunities. By 1798, more than two dozen Baltimoreans owned at least \$10,000 in property, and more than one-hundred owned at least \$2,000 in property. This nascent class of wealthy, urban elites sustained

¹⁴ James Kent, “A New Yorker in Maryland: 1793 and 1821,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 47 (1952): 139; Richard Bernard, “A Portrait of Baltimore in 1800: Economic and Occupational Patterns in an Early American City,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 69 (1974): 345-47; Federal Direct Tax of 1798, Baltimore City, MS.806, MHS (hereafter referred to as 1798 Baltimore Federal Direct Tax); and *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1800), hereafter referred to as 1800 Baltimore City Directory.

the growing number of specialized artisans in the luxury trades. By the end of the century, Baltimore had a piano forte maker, 2 picture frame makers, 4 engravers, including one who specialized in glass engraving, 4 confectioners, 4 jewelers, 5 upholsterers, 7 goldsmiths, 11 silversmiths, 10 china and glassware shops, 14 booksellers and stationers, 24 watch and clockmakers, 34 cabinet makers, and 15 chair makers, including one who specialized in making windsor chairs.¹⁵

Those in the shipbuilding trades benefited most from the revival of Atlantic trade. With American ships carrying a greater percentage of the Atlantic trade, the demand for new ship construction rocketed in the United States and Baltimore's shipbuilding industry expanded enormously. The 1800 city directory recorded 5 shipbuilders, 3 shipwrights, 5 boat builders, and 41 ship carpenters. Several of the ship carpenters, including William Parsons, Joseph Despeaux, and William Price, were really shipwrights who operated their own yards. Thus Baltimore had more than a dozen active shipbuilders by the turn of the century, many of them enormously wealthy. David Stodder, William Price, Dixon Brown, Joseph Biays, and Benjamin Baker were each in the top 10 percent of the city's property owners in 1798, while four other shipbuilders, Thomas Cole, John Steele, Isaac Sutton, and Nathaniel Thompson, were in the top 20 percent. The prosperity of the shipbuilders meant employment for other artisans and workers in the shipbuilding trades, and the number of people employed within the industry swelled into the hundreds. The 1800 city directory listed 16 sailmakers, 11 block and pump makers, 10 ship joiners, 9 ship chandlers, and 4 ropemakers, as well as dozens of riggers, caulkers, seamen,

¹⁵ 1798 Baltimore Federal Direct Tax, and 1800 Baltimore City Directory.

mariners, pilots, and sea captains.¹⁶

The economic vitality of the city's workshops required artisans to invest heavily in labor. Apprenticeship had been a cornerstone of the household economy, and demographics encouraged artisans to continue investing in this institution; white boys under the age of sixteen comprised 40 percent of the city's white male population in 1790, and thus represented the largest pool of potential workers for Baltimore's workshops. Not surprisingly, employers took advantage of the massive number of potential laborers to work out apprentice contracts under informal circumstances. Although small tears in the fabric of the old social order had appeared thanks to rifts between artisans and workers over customary rights, these struggles would not have brought about the collapse of the household economy. Decades could have passed before such tussles significantly eroded the traditional household economy. Apprentices ultimately had little reason to run away during the hard times of the 1780s, and delinquency was not a serious problem. What most interested Maryland lawmakers regarding the apprentice system was the increasing lack of communal oversight and the city's growing number of displaced orphans becoming caught up in the system. It appeared that the institution, which had never been well-organized in the colonial period, was becoming unmanageable by the late 1780s. To preserve the stability of the household economy, the Maryland Assembly took action to formalize apprenticeship.¹⁷

¹⁶ 1800 Maryland Census; 1798 Baltimore Federal Direct Tax; and 1800 Baltimore City Directory.

¹⁷ 1790 Maryland Census. The first census differentiated between free white males sixteen years and over, free white males under sixteen years old, free white females, all other free persons, and slaves. Thus a percentage of the total population below the age of sixteen is impossible to determine. For a different perspective on why Maryland chose to reform its apprentice laws, see Rorabaugh, "'I Thought I Should Liberate Myself from the Thralldom of Others,'" 202-04.

Instead of adopting a revolutionary approach to controlling labor and wages, the Assembly followed legal precedents stretching back to Elizabethan England. Maryland's new law streamlined the system, but its specific measures, which took effect in 1794, upheld customary practices in defense of the traditional social order. Masters were required to register apprentices in the Baltimore County Orphans Court; failure to do so resulted in a £3 fine. The law also empowered city officials to submit homeless orphans to the supervision of the Orphans Court, and four times a year, the court apprenticed these children to interested families. Once bound to a household, apprentices had to remain single, celibate, pious, dutiful to their masters, and respectful of private property. Masters provided the traditional requisites for apprentices, including food, shelter, spiritual guidance, and occupational instruction, as well as specified "freedom dues" owed at the end of the contract period. The law did not require, as did others around the republic, that masters teach their apprentices how to read and write. The new system worked in very much the way it was intended during the mid-1790s. On average, the Court bound out approximately 150 apprentices per year, mostly to artisans. Although the construction and textile trades and the shoemakers accounted for the largest shares of apprentices, every handicraft trade invested in apprenticed labor.¹⁸

Artisans also substantially increased the number of enslaved and free African American laborers in the city's workshops during the 1780s and 1790s. The city's enslaved population jumped from a few dozen at the beginning of the Revolution to

¹⁸ "An Act for the better regulation of apprentices," November 1793 session, in William Kitty, ed., *Laws of Maryland* (Annapolis: Frederick Green, 1800), chapter 45; Jonathan R.T. Hughes, *Social Control in the Colonial Economy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 96-98; and Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 28-32.

1,255 in 1790, and more than doubled again to 2,843 in 1800. The increase in the number of free African Americans was even more startling. Essentially a non-existent community in 1776, there were just 323 free African Americans in Baltimore in 1790. Over the course of the following decade, however, the free African-American population ballooned to 2,771. The overall number of African Americans within the city thus increased by more than 5,000 after the Declaration of Independence, accounting for approximately 25 percent of the city's total population expansion. In percentage terms, African Americans represented the fastest growing segment of the city. In 1776, Baltimore was more than 90 percent white. By 1790, African Americans accounted for almost 12 percent of the population. By 1800, more than 21 percent of Baltimore's population was African American, either free or enslaved. Merchants, shopkeepers, and professionals all contributed substantially to the net increase in the number of enslaved laborers, but enslaved workers also labored in artisan workshops too. Indeed, slavery proved just as universal to the handicraft trades as apprenticeship. It is also likely that as many as half of the city's enslaved workers labored in the city's workshops, because many merchants and professionals acquired enslaved workers in order to hire them out to the city's handicraft producers.¹⁹

The extensive practice of delayed manumission, or *term slavery*, led to a massive

¹⁹ For the growth of the Free Black and enslaved population in Baltimore, see "Census of Deptford Hundred, or Fell's Point, 1776," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 25 (1930): 271-75; Maryland Tax Lists, Baltimore Town, 1783, MHS; 1790 Maryland Census; and 1800 Maryland Census. For the reasons why slaveholding expanded, see Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens, GA: University Press of Georgia, 1991), 144-45; T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 10-12; and Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 36-40. For a different perspective on the reasons for the increase in Baltimore's enslaved population, see Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 16-20.

increase in the number of both enslaved and free African Americans in Baltimore during the 1790s. When an enslaved person was sold, instead of being condemned at that point to a lifetime of enslavement with a new master, an increasing percentage of such transactions specified a set date for the enslaved person's manumission. The delayed manumission therefore provided a term of years in which the worker would remain enslaved. The practice did not arise from humanitarian impulses for the abolition of slavery, or economic concerns over the institution's profitability. Unlike New York City's 1799 Gradual Manumission Law, *term slavery* was brought about by private initiative rather than legislative action. It was not a strategy used by employers to lure free laborers to the city, nor was it a sign that the supply of enslaved laborers exceeded demand. For Baltimore's slaveholders, delayed manumission was a tactic designed to extend slavery's viability within the urban economy. In a growing city, it was simply too easy for enslaved workers to disappear into the throng of several thousand free African Americans. The promise of manumission, even when delayed by several years, helped reduce the risk of runaways. The limitation on the period of enslavement also reduced the price to less than half the normal cost of acquiring a worker enslaved-for-life. This reduced the capital necessary to acquire enslaved labor, and enabled the institution to expand and prosper side-by-side the growing free African American community.²⁰

²⁰ New York's 1799 Gradual Manumission Law specified that all children born to enslaved parents after July 4, 1799 would be enslaved until their middle twenties, and thereafter be free. See White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 46-47. On the practice of delayed manumission and term slavery, see Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 12-24, 93-118; Christopher Phillips, "The Roots of Quasi-Freedom: Manumission and Term Slavery in Early National Baltimore," *Southern Studies*, 4 (1993): 39-66; and Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 30-56. For the prevalence of runaways in cities, see Richard Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 214-25; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 40-62; and Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 66-70.

Beyond the expansion of slavery and apprenticeship in the city's workshops, households also continued to rely on traditional structures of order, in this case the gendered division of labor. When Hyperion wrote to the *New England Palladium*, his primary concern was not directed towards the city's workshops, but the "home department." The language here is telling—Hyperion clearly believed that without patriarchy, the household economy could not be sustained. Households were not separate from workshops, and in the years after the Revolution the vitality of the artisanal economy provided a powerful reinforcement to many of the existing gender divisions. Patriarchy did not disappear with the Declaration of Independence, and the Revolution brought about only subtle alterations in its practice. Parents continued to cajole their children into proper marital choices, but there was an unmistakably greater degree of latitude extended even to daughters in the selection of spouses. Matrimony continued to be a hierarchical model enshrining male dominance and female subordination, but many couples nevertheless embraced a heightened sense of reciprocity in the marriage.²¹

Most important of all were the changes in child-rearing practices. The Revolutionary generation believed that a successful republic required virtuous citizens. Benjamin Rush, who at times seemed as naturally predisposed to heroic language as he was to "heroic medicine," proclaimed that "Virtue [and] Virtue alone" could preserve the republic. Yet even before the cannons had ceased roaring, many republicans believed that Americans' sense of virtue was quickly eroding. As early as 1780, James Warren observed that the public behavior of Bostonians better resembled the "ridiculous manners of Asiatic society" than "the hardy and sober manners of a New-England republic." In

²¹ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 228-35.

Virginia, Edmund Randolph brooded in the waning days of the war that Americans were engaged in a mad rush to fritter away every sense of public virtue through their “hunger and thirst after cheese and porter.” He feared that “in the opinion of those people” across the Atlantic “have admired our self-denial,” the new republic’s reputation would be irreparably tarnished.²² Immediate action was needed to restrain unhealthy and excessive appetites, and in an attempt to save the republic from the people, many republican theorists encouraged women to take a more active role in guarding and nurturing public and private virtue. Mothers were thus encouraged to employ reason rather than parental decree as a means of advancing republican virtues in their children. Women were believed better able to inculcate a sense of temperance, thrift, devotion to public service, and patriotic fervor in their sons. Thus for the first time, mothers assumed a greater role in the instruction of older children, including boys. The idea of republican motherhood was born.²³

The extension of the mother’s role in the instruction of children bolstered the idea that men were not intellectually superior to women, and helped bring about the advancement of female education in the young republic. For the daughters of the Revolutionary generation, this provided the groundwork for greater inclusion in the polity

²² For Rush’s comment, see “Excerpts from the Papers of Dr. Benjamin Rush,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 29 (1905): 21. Warren quoted in Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 358. For Randolph’s comment, see Edmund Randolph to James Madison, May 24, 1783, in *The Papers of James Madison*, ed. William Hutchinson and William Rachal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962-), VII, 73.

²³ Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, 235-38, 242-50; Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 11-12, 199-200; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Domesticating ‘Virtue’: Coquettes and Revolutionaries in Young America,” in *Literature and the Body*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 160-84. For an alternative view see Rosemarie Zagarri, “Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother,” *American Quarterly*, 44 (1992): 192-215.

in the long-term. Yet for the women of the Revolutionary generation itself, republican motherhood actually reinforced existing gender divisions. Prior to the Revolution, the greatest drain on a woman's time was child rearing. The increase in maternal responsibilities after the Revolution expanded the demands of child rearing even further, and there were just as many children being born after the Revolution as during the colonial period. There was certainly little generational change within the Keener family. Melchior Keener, a merchant, had migrated from Switzerland to York County, Pennsylvania by way of Rotterdam in 1739. He later removed from Pennsylvania to Baltimore in 1761 with his wife, Margaret. At the time, the couple had two children, Christian and Catherine. Before the end of the decade, Margaret gave birth to five more children, all of whom survived. The couple's eldest son, Christian, married Susannah Swope, the daughter of Reverend Benedict Swope of Baltimore's German Reformed Church. Susannah's subsequent life bore a striking resemblance to Margaret Keener's. In the twenty years after Susannah's marriage, she gave birth to thirteen children., and only one, John Joseph, died before reaching the age of eighteen. Susannah's experience was very common. At regular, two-year intervals between 1786 and 1798, Mary Biays, wife of shipbuilder James Biays, gave birth to seven children. Mary Carr Grundy, wife of merchant George Grundy, gave birth to eight children between her marriage in 1780 and her death in 1797 at the age of thirty-four. For these women, the patterns of life remained remarkably similar to the experience of their mothers and grandmothers.²⁴

Some of the prevailing sensibilities regarding women may have changed, but

²⁴ Grundy-Gibson Papers, MS.1294, MHS; Keener Family File, in Dielman-Hayward File, MHS; and Kathryn Allamong Jacob, "The Woman's Lot in Baltimore Town: 1729-1797," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 71 (1976): 287. John Joseph Keener, tenth child of Christian and Susannah Keener, was born 1794, and died two years later in 1796.

throughout the city, most women of the Revolutionary generation continued to face all the tedious household responsibilities familiar to their colonial forbearers. Greater freedom in marital choices and a greater sense of reciprocity between partners may have provided greater happiness in marriage, but through the 1790s, women's lives continued to be largely circumscribed by marriage, family, and housework. As a poem in the *Maryland Gazette* counseled women: "Reserved the decrees of fate, Do everything—but get a mate."²⁵ Patriarchy, much like apprenticeship and slavery, had survived into the early republic.

The vitality of the household economy in the 1780s and 1790s enabled artisans to strengthen their ranks even further through associational activity and political involvement. During the colonial period, artisans were not well organized. The first trade association in the city, the Mechanical Company, was a product of resistance to British rule. The company was, at first, largely dominated by the city's merchants. Melchior Keener held the first meeting in 1763 at his dry goods store, and was elected the company's president, an office he retained for ten years. When the Sons of Liberty organized a few years later, much its membership was drawn from the Mechanical Company. By 1773, artisans began playing a much larger role in the struggle for independence. With no end in sight to the troubles with Parliament and crown, it was an especially dangerous time to be in a position of leadership in either Baltimore or Maryland and not be identified with the province's or the city's leading revolutionaries. In Annapolis, Charles Carroll of Carrollton had gathered about him a "popular party," in which he was allied with William Paca, Thomas Johnson, and Samuel Chase against the

²⁵ *Maryland Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, July 3, 1775, quoted in Jacob, "The Woman's Lot in Baltimore Town," 284.

royal governor, Robert Eden. The galvanizing issue in the capitol was Eden's decision to arbitrarily set proprietary officials' fees. In Baltimore, a minor incident between customs collector William Moreton and merchant Samuel Purviance led to a riot. James Gaddes, who had allegedly told Moreton that Purviance's ship carried contraband goods, was seized by the mob, tarred and feathered, and then taken to the gallows where he was forced to plead for his life. In this increasingly radical atmosphere, Melchior Keener's tenure as president of the Mechanical Company was on shaky grounds. Many Baltimoreans regarded Keener's rather moderate political views as a mask for loyalist sentiments, and forced the merchant to step down. Thereafter, three consecutive artisans were elected as president of the company: Gerard Hopkins, who was a cabinet maker, Adam Fonerden, a wool card maker, and David Shields, a hatter.²⁶

Artisan organization stepped up even further after the Continental Congress adopted the Continental Association in October 1774. Baltimore's leading revolutionaries quickly called for elections to a Committee of Observation, and began raising militia companies to enforce the congressional mandate. The committee itself was largely dominated by merchants, but the militia was dominated by artisans. This was especially true after 1775, when the provincial convention revised the militia law to allow companies to elect their own officers. Inspired by the new law, artisans organized the Baltimore Mechanical Volunteer Company in December 1775, and thereafter were

²⁶ Keener Family File in Dielman-Hayward File, MHS; William McCreary, *The Ancient and Honorable Mechanical Company of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1901), esp. 1-15; "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Robert Moreton," and "Deposition of James Gaddes," in *Archives of Maryland*, ed. William Browne, et. al. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883-1972), LXIII, 427-29, 435. For the rise of the "popular party" in Annapolis and the continuing struggle between Governor Eden and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, see Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 60-151.

deeply involved in securing financial contributions for the war effort, and rooting out and censoring loyalists. When British troop strength on the continent expanded in 1776, many of the militia companies were called to duty. The Whig Club, in essence an extra-legal extension of the Committee of Observation, stepped into the void. Although its membership was more heavily slanted towards merchants than the militia had been, it too served as a means by which artisans became better organized and more politically involved. Much to the dismay of provincial leaders in Annapolis, the Whig Club proved extraordinarily zealous in its efforts to suppress suspected loyalists.²⁷

The experience of artisans in the defiance of Great Britain helped prepare tradesmen to organize in the post-war years. There seemed to be little need for political agitation during the speculator fervor of 1783-1784, and membership in the old Mechanical Company vanished. When increasing indebtedness led to the collapse of Atlantic trade, however, artisans took action. Craftsmen began organizing themselves by individual trades, and created an umbrella society called the Association of Tradesmen and Manufacturers to pursue collective goals. Following the lead of Boston artisans, the Association began clamoring almost immediately for a protective tariff to bolster domestic production. The following year, the Association promoted the candidacy of physician James McHenry for the state assembly. Although the numerous petitions for the tariff failed time and again to win support in Annapolis, and James McHenry was defeated for the assembly seat, the efforts themselves were important signs of the

²⁷ David Curtis Skaggs, *Roots of Maryland Democracy, 1753-1776* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Paul Kent Walker, "The Baltimore Community and the American Revolution: A Study in Urban Development, 1763-1783" (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1973), 243-68; Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 61-78; and Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 90-111.

persistence, and even the maturation of traditional society. By the 1790s, the basic structures of the household economy were increasingly solidified by the addition of dozens of formal trade associations, including the Carpenters' Society of Baltimore, the Association of Master Hatters, and the United Master Tailors. Unlike the Mechanical Association, the new trade associations embraced regulation within individual trades of prices, wages, working conditions, the terms of apprenticeship, and the status of journeymen—all along traditional lines.²⁸

More so than ever before, the household economy in Baltimore came to resemble that of London in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. François Auguste René de Chateaubriand reached precisely that conclusion soon after his arrival in the new republic. The younger son of a French aristocrat, Chateaubriand had followed a typical path for someone of his rank and position by joining the army. After the Fall of the Bastille, however, an being officer in a royalist regiment was no longer a safe position for an aristocrat, much less a profitable one. Thus Chateaubriand traveled to America with the declared purpose of finding a Northwest Passage. More likely, he wished to evade the increasingly intolerant regime in Paris, and many members of his family who remained in France soon found their heads at the bottom of baskets.²⁹

Upon reaching Baltimore, Chateaubriand was amazed at what he discovered. He explained that as “a man landing as I did in the United States, full of enthusiasm for the ancients, a Cato seeking everywhere for the rigidity of the early Roman manners,” he was

²⁸ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 81-120, and Sheller, “Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town,” 286-96.

²⁹ François Auguste René de Chateaubriand, *Chateaubriand's Travels in America*, trans. Richard Switzer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), xi-xiii.

shocked to find almost no difference between European and American culture. To the young aristocrat, “the United States gives rather the idea of a colony than a nation; there one finds customs, not mores.” Indeed, Chateaubriand continued, “At Philadelphia, I could have thought myself in an English town: nothing proclaimed that I had passed from a monarchy to a republic.” The use of the term *proclaimed* is the important part of the quotation. As Chateaubriand spent more time in the United States and conversed with Americans, he discerned differences in the political sensibilities of the people. Yet his first impressions, those of the bustle in the streets, the patterns of deference in the shops and homes, and the overall sense of social order in the cities, all *proclaimed* to him the persistence of traditional society.³⁰

CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Two crises during the 1790s threatened to unbalance the traditional social order. In both cases, however, the reaction of the Baltimore community typified the underlying corporatism of the city’s social order, and Baltimoreans’ continued adherence to traditional social and political structures. The first challenge arrived in Baltimore harbor on July 9, 1793, when ships carrying refugees from San Domingo began arriving. The refugees had fled their island on June 23 after revolutionaries burned the town of Le Cap-François. More than 5,000 people fled on board more than 130 French merchant vessels. By the afternoon of July 10, twenty-two of those vessels had crowded the harbor off Fell’s Point. Eventually, 53 ships arrived in Baltimore, carrying more than 1,000 white and 500 black refugees into a city. At the time, Baltimore’s population was

³⁰ Chateaubriand, *Chateaubriand's Travels in America*, 15.

approximately 17,000, thus the refugees amounted to 9 percent of the city's population. An equivalent crisis at the dawn of the twenty-first century would involve more than 50,000 refugees arriving in Baltimore at one time. A committee of the city's leading merchants immediately formed to procure temporary housing and relief for the refugees. Samuel Hollingsworth took a leading role in these efforts, and the committee secured over \$12,000 in donations within two days. Within a month, over four-hundred French refugees found shelter in private homes within the city. Not every Baltimorean reacted with the same sense of communal obligation. On July 15, the *Baltimore Daily Advertiser* reported that a local farmer took advantage of "a poor Frenchman" from Cap-François by demanding "a *dollar per dozen*" for eggs. The refugee believed the price too high, but being "uncertain of the usual price of our markets, at length procured a *dozen for three quarters of a dollar*."³¹ Notwithstanding other minor incidents of abuse which undoubtedly occurred, the general response of the community emphasized the sense that Baltimore's residents comprised a single organic entity guided by deference to a traditional hierarchical order.

Many of the white refugees quickly established themselves at the center of city life. Paul Aimé-Fleury opened a school on the Upper Falls, and Madame Lacombe began a boarding school for girls on South Street in 1795. Berquin-Duvallon, an accomplished lawyer in Le Cap-François, became a well-respected attorney in Baltimore. J. Pinaud, a renowned fencing instructor in both Paris and London, proclaimed a "fencing assault" at

³¹ *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, July 15 and July 26, 1793, and Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 578-79. The committee which sought to procure temporary housing for the refugees included Robert Gilmor, George Pressman, Philip Rogers, Jeremiah Yellott, James Carey, James McHenry, Robert Smith, Zebulon Hollingsworth, Thomas McElderry, Stephen Wilson, John O'Donnell, Adam Fonerden, Thomas Coulson, David Plunkett, Samuel Sterrett, Paul Bentalou, and Colonel Daniel Smith.

the Sign of Indian Queen. Doctor Pierre Chatard, a graduate of the College of Toulouse, also settled in Baltimore and helped the city combat its yellow fever epidemics in 1797 and 1800. Edmé Ducatel became a successful druggist on Baltimore Street, and Jean Charles-Marie-Louis Pascault, Marquis de Poléon, established one of largest mercantile houses in the city.³²

Many of the black refugees did not fare as well as their white counterparts. Displaced, propertyless, French-speaking plantation workers from a Catholic island in the West Indies, they were suddenly thrust into a mostly English-speaking, largely Protestant, intensely urban setting in North America. Adjustment promised to be difficult, for both the refugees and those living in Baltimore at the time. Explaining the situation in the city, Robert Brent claimed that the black refugees “appear to be completely inert and careless and helpless, spending their time singing, [and] living hand to mouth.” Although city officials had done an admirable job finding temporary lodging upon the refugees’ arrival, it seemed to Brent that “the officials of the city do not know where to turn to seek and obtain relief.” He did not see the Domingans as a benign presence, complaining that some of the black refugees “even appear hostile,” and that “shops are subject to pillage and houses are nightly being looted.” For Brent, the refugee crisis had placed “the city . . . under a cloud. Every one is uneasy as if awaiting some sinister event.” One solution seemed quite palatable for Brent: “To return then whence they came seems to be the answer which is on the lips of a goodly number of [my] neighbors.” The corporatism underlying the city was clearly fraying, and Baltimore seemed poised for a

³² Walter Hartridge, “The Refugees from the Island of St. Domingo in Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 38 (1943): 110-18.

conflagration.³³

Fortunately for all concerned, a group of French emigre priests of the Society of St. Sulpice took up the cause of helping the black Domingans adapt to their new surroundings. The Sulpicians shared three things in common with the refugees: they spoke French, they were Catholic, and they were also refugees of a revolution—in this case the revolution in France rather than the revolution in Haiti. The Sulpicians had been condemned by the regime in Paris, and being no longer able to maintain their schools in France, many decided in 1791 to emigrate. The plight of the Sulpicians caught the attention of Bishop John Carroll across the Atlantic. Carroll had struggled in the years after the Revolution to build the legitimacy and expand the membership of the Roman Catholic Church in America, and invited the Sulpicians to settle in Baltimore. He hoped that they would establish a seminary, and help train a native clergy in the United States. In April 1791, four members of the society and five seminarians boarded a ship at Saint-Malo bound for Baltimore. It happened to be the same vessel that François-René de Chateaubriand took to reach America, and the Frenchman recalled that for several of the Sulpicians, the voyage almost proved more treacherous than the authorities back in France. When the ship reached the seas off Maryland's Eastern Shore, the winds died and the heat became so oppressive that several passengers decided to take a swim in the ocean. Unfortunately, for the swimmers, the current carried the ship away. When sharks were sighted in the water, the crew frantically began firing into the water, and made a

³³ Robert Brent to John Curry, April 2, 1794, quoted in William Fletcher, "The Contribution of the Faculty of Saint Mary's Seminary to the Solution of Baltimore's San Domingan Negro Problem, 1793-1852," (M.A., The Johns Hopkins University, 1951), 28-29. Earlier warnings and complaints about the presence of the black Domingans in Baltimore appeared in the *Maryland Gazette* on July 16 and August 30, 1793.

furious attempt to launch a boat to save the hapless swimmers. Before matters worsened, however, the incident was resolved by what Chateaubriand called “the greatest stroke of luck.” A “barely perceptible breeze came up,” and the ship was able to close the distance to reach the swimmers. The remainder of the voyage up the Chesapeake Bay proved uneventful, and the ship entered Baltimore on July 10, 1791.³⁴

On July 18, 1791, the Sulpicians moved into a house one mile north of the town, and on October 3 opened the doors to St. Mary’s Seminary of Saint Sulpice. Within the next eighteen months, the faculty was bolstered by the arrival of eight more priests, including Father William duBourg who had been born in Le Cap François, St. Domingo. He had emigrated to France at the age of two to live with his grandparents, trained at the College de Guyenne where he received Orders in 1788. In 1792 he joined the Sulpicians in Baltimore, and the following year, encouraged his fellow priests to set up classes for the black Domingans, find work for those who were able, and even purchase several of the refugees who were still enslaved to white Domingans. Many of Baltimore’s leading merchants and artisans, including many Protestants, employed refugees. Bishop Carroll appointed Father duBourg to become the president of Georgetown College in 1796, but the seminary maintained their aid to the black Domingans after his departure.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Baltimore’s black Catholic Haitians maintained a

³⁴ Chateaubriand, *Chateaubriand’s Travels in America*, 8-13. The four members of the society on board were Francis Nagot, Anthony Garnier, John Tessier, and Michael Levadoux. The five seminarians included John Floyd, Edward Cantwell, Francis Tulloh, and John de Mondesir, Joseph Perinault. See Charles Herbermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1916), 1-23, and Joseph Ruane, *The Beginnings of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States, 1791-1829* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1935). For Bishop John Carroll’s post-Revolutionary struggles, see Thomas Spalding, *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), and John Gilmay Shea, *A History of the Catholic Church Within the Limits of the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1978; orig. 1886-1892).

sense of community, and what had seemed a potential threat to the traditional order of society in fact became a lasting testament to its persistence.³⁵

The other major crisis of the decade, and in many ways the defining political issue in Baltimore after the Revolution, was the struggle to obtain a city charter. In the years immediately preceding the war, few people believed that it was necessary to divide the town from Baltimore county. Despite the growth of Baltimore in the 1760s and early 1770s, the population of the town was still far smaller than that of the surrounding countryside, and most Marylanders believed that the county's officials and the town's various civic agencies were still able to properly administer the affairs of the town. With Baltimore's rising prosperity during the war, however, the city's poorly paved streets, increasing lawlessness, and lack of regulation in the its markets appeared beyond the capacity of the constituted authorities. A resident of Baltimore County griped in 1782 that "there are no streets in any town whatever more [of] a disgrace to its inhabitants" than those of Baltimore. The deteriorating situation finally prompted Baltimoreans to propose a city charter in April 1782 to establish greater autonomy over local government.³⁶

Objections raised by laboring people doomed the 1782 charter proposal, which never reached the assembly. Yet the desire for incorporation still burned within the city, and two years later, a group of merchants and professionals proposed another charter.

³⁵ Herbermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States*, 170-80, and Fletcher, "The Contribution of the Faculty of Saint Mary's Seminary," 34-45. The persistence of Baltimore's Black, Catholic Haitian community became the subject of a magazine article in 1878, and newspaper article as late as 1929. See Eugene Didier, "The Coloured Creoles of Baltimore," *Lippincott's Magazine*, July 1878, and "The Baltimoreans from San Domingo," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 1929, cited in Fletcher, "The Contribution of the Faculty of Saint Mary's Seminary."

³⁶ *Maryland Journal*, April 30, 1782, and Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 196.

Once again, arguments over its terms led to the collapse of the movement, and the assembly in Annapolis never had the opportunity to consider this measure. Hoping to avoid a repeat of past quarrels, charter proponents side-stepped public debate in Baltimore altogether in 1786 by making a proposal directly to the state assembly. This charter was staunchly anti-democratic, with steep property qualifications for office. The plot backfired, however, when merchant Richard Lemmon seized a copy and returned with it to Baltimore. The *Maryland Journal* published the proposed plan of government, and when controversy erupted, all hopes for its passage vanished immediately. No further attempts were made to secure a charter during the decade.³⁷

Opponents of the 1782, 1784, and 1786 charter proposals did not object to the idea of Baltimoreans gaining greater control over local government. There was near-universal agreement that the efforts of county officials and Baltimore's various civic agencies were no longer adequate to meet the needs of the city. What artisans feared the most was the potential range of powers that would be granted to a municipal corporation. A legal creation of medieval society, the primary function of a municipal corporation in England had been to separate urban tradesmen and merchants from the influence of the surrounding landed aristocrats, and to provide regulation of commerce and trade within the city. Instead of promoting economic growth, the regulations adopted by most incorporated towns were meant to promote social order and eliminate dearth and disease. The government could limit the number of tradesmen allowed in a particular craft, set wages, hold down prices, or establish monopolies. Artisans feared that these powers

³⁷ Walker, "The Baltimore Community and the American Revolution," 345-46; Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 123-27; and Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 345-54.

could easily be used to retard the growth of Baltimore and thus hurt the household economy. Various trade associations had just recently begun to practice regulatory activity within their individual crafts, and they were not willing to surrender the ability to control the terms under which their workshops operated to a merchant-led municipal corporation. In essence, artisans feared that an ill-conceived charter would upset the balance between the mercantile and household economies.³⁸

In 1793, a new charter proposal sought to accommodate artisan concerns over the powers of a municipal corporation. Under its terms, the bicameral city council would be prohibited from laying taxes on artisan tools, inventories, raw materials used in manufacturing goods, or on property in the city's western precincts where a significant percentage of the city's artisans resided. The council would also be prohibited from restraining anybody from participation in any profession or trade.³⁹ Despite these efforts, artisans still objected to the property qualifications for public office. Political representation by ward would be enumerated on the basis of taxable residents, and while there were no additional property qualifications to be elected to the city council, a minimum of \$1,000 in property was needed to be considered for the council of electors. This body had the responsibility of electing the mayor, the members of the upper chamber of the council, and approving all mayoral appointments. To many Baltimoreans, the 1793 charter appeared just as anti-democratic as its predecessors. A number of trade associations thus joined together to form the United Committees in

³⁸ Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 337-41. For the origins and evolution of the municipal corporation, see Jon Teafor, *The Municipal Revolution in America: Origins of Modern Urban Government, 1650-1825* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

³⁹ *An Act for Incorporating Baltimore-Town, in Baltimore-County, into a City by the Name of the City of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Philip Edwards, 1794).

January 1794 to oppose the proposed charter.⁴⁰

As the 1794 assembly elections approached, the United Committees published a highly democratic alternative to the charter proposed in 1793. A single Board of Commissioners with both legislative and executive power, elected annually by the people without respect to property, race, or age, replaced the bicameral model.⁴¹ On October 3, 1794, a few days to the election, the United Committees chose to support lawyer James Winchester and merchant Alexander McKim to champion their cause in the assembly. The stark contrast in the two plans of government generated much impassioned debate over the next two years, but in the end, the Maryland House of Delegates approved a charter for Baltimore in December 1796 that largely ignored both the 1793 and 1794 proposals. When the Maryland Senate approved the legislation in January 1797, Baltimore formally became an incorporated city. Artisans grumbled over the resolution of the charter struggle, and many vowed that they would fight for reform. Yet most Baltimoreans grudgingly accepted the resolution. Despite the initial howls of protest, political debate quickly swung away from the charter controversy and onto new topics. The 1798 Congressional election between James Winchester and Samuel Smith centered on the candidates' views regarding the Quasi-War with France and the notorious XYZ Affair, not Winchester's involvement in the charter struggle.⁴²

One historian concluded that Baltimoreans acquiesced to the 1797 charter because

⁴⁰ Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 196, 267; Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 127-31; and Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 356-67. The United Committees also included the Republican Society, a newly formed maverick group of merchants dedicated to what they perceived to be the principles of the French Revolution.

⁴¹ *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, September 12 and 30, 1794.

⁴² Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 131-40, and Sheller, "Artisans and the Evolution of Baltimore Town," 367-94.

“the townspeople must have reached a point of exhaustion where any charter seemed desirable if it could settle the fourteen-year controversy.”⁴³ Although this may have been true, there was a more likely reason. The primary objections to the charters of the 1780s had centered around the potentially damaging powers of a municipal corporation. Although the 1793 and 1794 proposals embraced very different plans of government, they were in substantial agreement regarding what government should be able to do. There were minor differences, of course. The 1793 proposal stated that government should regulate public amusements, while the 1794 proposal stated that government should regulate and restrain them. The 1793 proposal stated that the government should attend to the prevention of disease and the maintenance of public health within the limits of Baltimore; the 1794 proposal embraced the same ideals, but extended the government’s jurisdiction on these matters into the western precincts as well.⁴⁴ Yet these were quibbles over details, not arguments over direction. By the late 1790s, it was clear that for most people, the fear over the possible abuse of municipal power had subsided, and the only major disagreements left were over how frequently elections should be held, and what the qualifications should be for the highest offices. In the end, these were not good reasons to hold up a resolution of the charter struggle, even a less-than-perfect one. With the threat to the balance between the maritime and household economies no longer at issue, few censured Winchester’s decision in 1797 to go along with the assembly’s plan of government.

⁴³ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 140.

⁴⁴ *An Act for Incorporating Baltimore-Town*, and *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, September 30, 1794.

THE DAWN OF THE MANUFACTURERS

Not everyone was committed to maintaining the household economy and sustaining what amounted to a colonial framework for American life. After the Revolution, a few handicraft producers and political leaders encouraged the development of a native class of manufacturers to promote American economic independence from Great Britain. These prophets of industrialization, including Tench Coxe and Alexander Hamilton, rejected both the mercantilist world of colonial restrictions, and the American neomercantilist *mentalité* that evolved after the war. They believed that a balance needed to be struck between commerce, agriculture, and domestic production, and in the context of the post-colonial American economy, this required a significant push towards developing American manufacturing. Unlike the wartime advocates for American self-sufficiency who relied on a litany of republican appeals calling for boycotts, self-sacrifice, and moral fortitude in defense of public virtue, the post-war manufacturing advocates recognized that the best way to break the American passion for British manufactures was to replace the British imports with American-made goods.⁴⁵

Embedded in the pro-manufacturing strategy was an implicit attack on the model of the artisanal workshop. In his "Report on Manufactures" in 1791, Alexander Hamilton drew a sharp contrast between the two types of production, and strongly favored government support for manufactories: "Except the simple and ordinary kinds of household Manufactures, or those for which there are very commanding local advantages, pecuniary bounties are in most cases indispensable to the introduction of a new branch." The "simple and ordinary" types of household manufactures to which

⁴⁵ Jacob Cooke, "Tench Coxe, Alexander Hamilton, and the Encouragement of American Manufactures," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser., 32 (1975): 369-92.

Hamilton referred, which were not slated for replacement by the new type of production, were articles produced in the home itself. The “new branch” of production were those establishments which embraced the division of labor, mechanization, and did not limit the potential pool of laborers to apprentices, journeymen, and the enslaved. Under Hamilton’s plan, these establishments were to be protected from foreign competition using tariffs and other regulations on trade.⁴⁶ The potential rise of a native manufacturing class thus represented a fundamental challenge to both the neomercantilist assumptions of the post-war maritime economy as well as the vitality of the household economy.

In drawing a distinction between workshops and manufactories, Hamilton contributed to the growing distinction between artisan workshops and manufactories. The word *manufacturer* derives from the Latin phrase *manu facere*, meaning “to make by hand,” and was commonly used to describe both laborers and employers during the first half of the eighteenth century. It was largely interchangeable with the more established terms *artificer*, *artisan*, *craftsman*, *handicraftsman*, and *mechanic*. As late as 1755, the eminent Samuel Johnson found very little variation between these words, defining each of the terms by the others in his much-prized dictionary. Indeed, the word *manufacturer* appeared as part of the definition in each of the other terms.⁴⁷ Manufactures and

⁴⁶ “Alexander Hamilton’s Final Version of the Report on the Subject of Manufactures,” December 5, 1791, in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), X, 249, 284, 301.

⁴⁷ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: W. Strahan, 1755). Johnson defined a *manufacturer* as “a workman; an artificer.” He defined an *artificer* as “an artist; a manufacturer; one by whom any thing is made.” A *mechanick* was “a manufacturer; a low workman.” A *craftsman* was “an artificer; a manufacturer; a mechanick,” and a *handicraftsman* was “a manufacturer; one employed in manual occupation.” Johnson defined the term *artisan* a little differently. Derived from a French word based on the Latin root *artifex*, an artisan was an “artist; professor of art.” Nevertheless, the secondary definition for an artisan was a “manufacturer; low tradesman.” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the words *maker*, *craftsman*, and *artificer* first entered the English language in the fourteenth century; the nouns

manufactories were indistinguishable from artisans and workshops—they were synonymous within the model of household production that dominated both Hanoverian Britain and colonial America.

The meaning of the word *manufacturer* began to change after the Seven Years' War. In this great contest of empires, British armies fought against the French in Europe, India, and North America, and the Royal navy confronted French men-of-war in the Caribbean, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. To carry on this conflict and ultimately defeat the French, Great Britain spent approximately £160 million, the vast majority of which was financed through long-term bonds. Saddled with such a huge war debt, Parliament introduced new taxes in the colonies, and actively promoted domestic production to boost trade. Both of these measures were meant to raise government revenues for the purpose of retiring the empire's enormous financial burden.⁴⁸ To help promote domestic production, the London Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture, and Commerce began offering a long list of premiums, or prizes, for inventions deemed useful to the commerce of the nation. Textile production benefited almost immediately from a series of technological advances.⁴⁹ In particular, James Hargreaves's spinning jenny (1764), Richard Arkwright's water frame (1768), Samuel Crompton's spinning

artisan, mechanick, handicraftsman, and the verb *manufact* appeared between 1538 and 1551. The first cited use of the noun *manufactor* appeared in 1649, and the first cited use of the noun *manufacturer* appeared in 1719 (although both words were likely in use before those dates).

⁴⁸ Nancy Koehn estimated that the £160 million price tag for the conflict represented twice Great Britain's total Gross National Product in 1760. This would be analogous to the United States waging a war at the beginning of the twenty-first century that cost \$19 trillion, or approximately three-and-a-half times the total U.S. national debt in 2001. See Nancy Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 5.

⁴⁹ Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 16-60.

mule (1779), and Edmund Cartwright's power loom (1785) placed British textile manufacturing securely at the forefront of the industrial age.

As new woolen manufactories began dotting the English and Scottish countryside, the meaning of the word *manufacturer* began to change. Although technological improvements were important to the growth of the new manufactories, the substitution of mechanical devices for laborers was neither a focus of early industrialization, nor an important difference between manufacturers and artisans. Despite the increase in gadgetry, nearly all members of both groups still fell squarely into the category of handicraft production. In essence, the emerging difference between manufacturers and artisans came down to the size of their respective establishments. Late eighteenth-century political economists recognized this as the emerging difference between the two groups. Instead of focusing on technology, they centered their analysis on the division of labor. The new manufactories employed dozens of workers in an attempt to improve productivity through economies of scale, whereas the artisan's workshop employed at most a few apprentices and a journeyman or two. Thus manufacturers were increasingly seen as supervisors of people, whereas artisans continued to be identified as producers of goods.⁵⁰

Across the Atlantic, Americans eagerly participated in the evolution of manufacturing enterprises from household to industrial production. By 1776, the British American colonies produced one-seventh of the world's crude iron in dozens of forges scattered from Virginia to New England. Baltimore contributed handsomely to this total. The rich deposits of iron ore discovered in the Patapsco River Valley during the early

⁵⁰ François Crouzet, *The First Industrialists: The Problem of Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2.

eighteenth century were the initial reason for the more intense settlement of the area in the 1720s. The crisis with Parliament and crown during the 1760s and early 1770s provided an additional spur to American interest in domestic production. During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress encouraged mechanization in the manufacture of war materials, especially saltpeter (potassium nitrate), a vital ingredient in making gunpowder that Americans had previously imported. Although Baltimore did not figure prominently in this industry, the city did have a gunpowder mill, and the Principio Works in nearby Cecil County became a leading producer of arms and ammunition throughout the war.⁵¹

Renewed British competition after the war led to the collapse several of Baltimore's budding manufacturing enterprises. Yet interest in technological innovation and the establishment of large-scale production continued in other trades. Thanks to Oliver Evans, Baltimore and its environs remained at the forefront of American manufacturing in the wake of the Revolution. In 1783, Evans invented the means by which water-powered machinery could move grain through a mill and carry away the flour. As historian George Terry Sharrer explained, Evans's method "arranged several noncontinuous operations into a continuing sequence," and eliminated the need for much of the human labor previously involved in the milling process.⁵² Evans worked in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore while developing his process. Although his process did not substantially increase the amount of flour milled per hour compared to other

⁵¹ John Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 8-14.

⁵² George Terry Sharrer, "Flour Milling and the Growth of Baltimore, 1783-1830" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1975), 72.

methods, it did reduce the number of workers needed at a mill. Evans estimated that a mill producing forty barrels of flour per day needed four men and a boy using traditional methods. Using his automated method, only one or two men would be needed. Thus savings in labor costs, rather than faster production, made Evans's process more lucrative than other techniques.⁵³

In 1785, two of Evans's brothers placed the automated system into commercial use for the first time in a mill erected near Wilmington, Delaware. By 1787, Evans secured a Maryland patent for the machinery, and two years later, granted permission to Josiah Pennington of Baltimore County to use the automated process. An announcement in the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* publicized the agreement with Pennington. Evans hoped that the demonstration would prove the utility of his invention, and convince other millers to pay him royalties due for the use of his automated process. The plan worked. In August 1790, the Ellicott brothers, arguably Baltimore's most important millers, certified that they had "erected Oliver Evans's new invented mode of elevating, conveying, and cooling meal, &c." They further assured the public that Evans's process was "well worthy of attention of any person concerned in merchant, or even extensive country mills, who wishes to lessen the labour and expense of manufacturing wheat into flour."⁵⁴ Thanks to Evans, automated grain milling emerged as an important symbol of both American industrialization and the emerging class of manufacturers.

⁵³ Sharrer, "Flour Milling," 65-89.

⁵⁴ *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, May 14, 1787. Testimonial of John, Jonathan, George, and Nathaniel Ellicott of Ellicott's Mills, Baltimore County, Maryland, August 4, 1790, quoted in Oliver Evans, *Young Mill-wright and Miller's Guide* (Philadelphia: Oliver Evans, 1795), III, 122.

Although Wilmington and the millers along the Brandywine Creek benefited first from Evans's process, Baltimore quickly became the leading center for automated grain milling in the United States. Elisha Tyson, Isaac McPherson, and Thomas and John Hollingsworth all adopted the process for their mills, and by 1800, Baltimore had at least fifty automated grain mills within eighteen miles of the city along the Jones' and Gwynn's Falls, and the Patapsco and Little Gunpowder Rivers. Hoping to further profit from his invention, Evans applied for and received the third patent issued by the United States on December 18, 1790.⁵⁵

Evans was not the only millwright in the mid-Atlantic region who achieved an impressive degree of mechanization. In 1797, the Duke de La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, a French aristocrat travelling in the United States, described the automated mill belonging to the Ellicott family as having "six pair of millstones, and constructed as well as any of the mills of Brandywine, of which it possesses all the perfections." The Duke believed that in the area of grain milling, the Ellicotts' mill represented the most advanced engineering in the world, rivalling mills in operation near "London Bridge in England and those the brothers Perrier have constructed at Paris near Gros-caillou." Within a few years, the Ellicotts operated numerous automated mills, including three located consecutively on Gwynn's Falls. These mills alone processed almost half-a-million bushels of grain per year, and produced more flour than all twelve mills along the Brandywine Creek in Delaware.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Greville Bathe and Dorothy Bathe, *Oliver Evans: A Chronicle of Early American Engineering* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935), 323, and John Mullin, *The Baltimore Directory for 1799* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1799), 126.

⁵⁶ François-Alexandre, Duke de La Rochefoucauld Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America* (London: R. Phillips, 1799), III, 493, and Robert Sutcliff, *Travels in Some*

The impressive achievements of the region's miller-merchants can easily cloud the real extent of industrialization prior to 1800. Americans accounted for many impressive inventions during the late eighteenth century, but the British proved the leaders in developing new technologies in the First Industrial Revolution. Notwithstanding Eli Whitney's cotton "gin" (1793), Britain's technical edge proved especially true in the textile industry.⁵⁷ British patents for cotton and woolen manufacturing outnumbered American patents 96 to 86 between 1790 and 1812. Although the margin may seem relatively small, the numbers do not take into account that British patents cost at least £70 and took between six weeks and three months to process. Given that a cotton factory overseer's typical income amounted to just £50 per year in England in 1800, the British patent system proved exclusionary. In the United States, the patent process was far more democratic. A patent cost only \$30, or the equivalent of £6 15s, and after the new law of 1800, could be accomplished by swearing to an affidavit. Given the limitations of the British system, the relatively small margin is

Parts of North America in the Years 1804, 1805 and 1806 (York, England: W. Alexander, 1815), 80.

⁵⁷ A few historians dispute Britain's claim to technological supremacy, arguing that the American "jack-of-all-trades" was actually superior to a skilled British factory worker, and American know-how equaled the British by the 1780s. See Eugene Ferguson, "The American-ness of American Technology," *Technology and Culture*, 20 (1979): 3-24; Thomas Cochran, *Frontiers of Change: Early Industrialization in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 281. Doron Ben-Atar refused to engage in this debate, and argued instead that "the extent of the foreign espionage effort" in Britain demonstrated the degree that Americans envied British expertise. For Ben-Atar's study, it did not matter whether or not British technology was superior, only that Alexander Hamilton, Tench Coxe, and others "believed it to be so." See Doron Ben-Atar, "Alexander Hamilton's Alternative: Technology Piracy and the Report on Manufactures," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 52 (1995): 397 n.44.

therefore quite significant.⁵⁸

Unfortunately for American entrepreneurs, the British government vigilantly guarded British technological secrets from foreign eyes. After the American Revolution, Parliament prohibited skilled artisans from freely leaving Britain or Ireland for any country outside the British Empire. Additional legislation forbade anyone from enticing manufacturers to emigrate or export machinery for the production of textiles, clocks, paper, glass, and many other manufactured goods. Although both European and American governments officially recognized the British restrictions, authorities on both sides of the Atlantic actively promoted industrial espionage in Britain. As Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton also encouraged the emigration of skilled British workers to the United States, and promoted the idea of granting patents to Americans for minor innovations on British designs. These various efforts sometimes met with success. The most spectacular American prize arrived in 1789, when Samuel Slater brought the design for Arkwright's "water frame" from Britain in his head. For the most part, however, the British government proved adept at keeping the nation's technological secrets from foreign eyes, using at least six government agencies to enforce the Parliament's restrictive laws.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ David Jeremy, "Invention in American textile technology during the early nineteenth century, 1790-1830," in *Artisans, Entrepreneurs, and Machines* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), VIII, 1-42. Although it is true that Thomas Jefferson frowned on issuing patents, believing monopolies were harmful to a republic, his influence over the granting of patents extended only to 1793 when he ceased to be Secretary of State.

⁵⁹ David Jeremy, "Damning the Flood: British Government Efforts to Check the Outflow of Technicians and Machinery, 1780-1843," *Business History Review*, 51 (1977): 1-34; David Jeremy, *Transatlantic Industrial Revolution: The Diffusion of Textile Technologies Between Britain and America, 1790-1830s* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1981), 240-51; John Harris, "Industrial Espionage in the Eighteenth Century," *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 7 (1985): 127-38; and David Jeremy, "Transatlantic Industrial Espionage in the Early Nineteenth Century: Barriers and Penetrations," *Textile History*, 26 (1995): 95-122. For Hamilton's role in the

Like their British counterparts, American inventors also jealously guarded their secrets from the public. Evans's revolutionary process was an important symbol of industrialization in the mid-Atlantic, and its fame undoubtedly contributed to the continuing shift in meaning of the word *manufacturer* away from its traditional synonyms. Yet the details of his automated process remained largely hidden from the public until the publication of his 1795 book, *The Young Millwright and Miller's Guide*. The publication of his process may have proved Evans's biggest mistake. Although the U.S. patent protected Evans throughout the nation against millers using his machinery without a license, his book so completely described the automated process that almost anyone could reproduce the technology. After 1800, this potential pitfall blossomed into a real problem for Evans as millwrights throughout the mid-Atlantic mechanized along the lines described in the book. During the 1780s and 1790s, however, few producers benefited from Evans's designs, and newer technologies in general, because of restricted access to them.

Despite the best efforts of pro-manufacturing advocates like Hamilton and Coxe to secure government support for American industrialization, competition from British imports and the secrecy which surrounded technological innovations helped retard the development of manufactories in the late 1780s and 1790s. Yet the most significant threat to the extension of what Hamilton called the "new branch" of production was the

diffusion of British technology, see Ben-Atar, "Alexander Hamilton's Alternative," 389-414; Edward Walterscheid, "To the Editor"; and Doron Ben-Atar, "Doron Ben-Atar replies," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 53 (1996): 425-30. It should be noted that Hamilton was not alone in taking a cavalier attitude toward foreign intellectual property rights. Over ten percent of the British patents granted between 1790 and 1830 were for minor innovations on foreign designs, most of them American. For Samuel Slater and his influence on the early American textile industry the best treatment is Barbara Tucker, *Samuel Slater and the Origins of the American Textile Industry, 1790-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

coalition of interests between merchants and artisans in America's seaports. From the merchants' perspective, a few types of manufactories, like ropewalks and nail manufactories, were necessary to the functioning of the domestic economy. The further extension of manufactories into most areas of production, on the other hand, represented a potential threat to the dominance of the import-export trade. The maintenance of a robust household economy promised to limit the development of large-scale manufacturing in the city. Johann David Schoepf observed that "the object of the merchants of Baltimore, as of American merchants generally, is exports and imports. They neither intend nor desire to be manufacturers, and do not care to see such among them or very much to encourage them." Schoepf believed that the merchants' disdain arose as much from materialist rather than idealist reasons, "for the more wares are fabricated in the country itself, so much the less would the merchant have to bring in."⁶⁰ As in the colonial period, overseas trade reinforced a domestic economy based on household production.

As late as 1798, manufacturers were nearly an invisible group within Baltimore. A few intrepid entrepreneurs had begun using the term *manufacturer* to describe their operations, but they amounted to only three percent of the city's handicraft producers. Most artisans continued to use traditional designations. Manufacturers represented such a tiny percentage of the occupational structure that they were even outnumbered in the city by the number of landed gentlemen. In the Federal Direct Tax of 1798 for Baltimore City, very little separated the assessments of manufacturers from those of traditional artisans. The manufacturers' average assessment was marginally above the city's overall

⁶⁰ Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation [1783-1784]*, trans. and ed. Alfred Morrison (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1911), I, 330.

mean, while the traditional artisans' average assessment was nearly equal to the city's mean. Both groups were therefore in the middling part of society. Clearly the division of labor that manufacturers relied upon to create wealth had not yet produced significant returns by the turn of the nineteenth century. Manufacturers accounted for only four percent of the total assessed property of the handicraft producers. Baltimore's economy remained squarely centered on household production dominated by traditional artisans.⁶¹

Through the post-war economic adjustments to a peacetime economy, the trials of the charter controversy, the challenge of the Haitian refugee crisis, and the beginnings of a manufacturing revolution in America, the basic structures of traditional society persisted into the late 1790s. The resiliency of the household economy and the vitality of the nation's overseas trade helped sustain many of the institutions of colonial America beyond the Revolution. As long as the port remained busy, there seemed little reason for anyone to suspect that the patterns of life in Baltimore and its hinterlands would change to any great extent at the turn of the nineteenth century.

⁶¹ 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax and 1800 Baltimore City Directory. The figure of four percent for the manufacturers' percentage of the handicraft producers' total assessed property, was calculated using several steps. First, the number of artisans and manufacturers in the 1800 Baltimore City Directory was multiplied by their average assessed property in the 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax. Those numbers were then added to calculate the total assessed property for all handicraft producers. Finally, the manufacturers' total assessed property was divided by the handicraft producers' total assessed property to produce the manufacturers' percentage of the handicraft producers' total assessed wealth.

CHAPTER FIVE

HARD TIMES

Samuel Brooke faced a serious problem. After enjoying several years of brisk trade at his shop in Baltimore, sales plummeted sharply in early 1797. The sudden downturn caught him quite by surprise. Like so many young men of his generation, Brooke had spent considerable time during the 1790s scouting the Atlantic coast for the best place to locate a business. During those travels he was suitably impressed by the bustling shores of Manhattan, writing his sister that he found the city “to be a place of considerable business . . . and far from being divested of the fashionable follies and vices of the age.” He concluded that “I think it rather has the lead of any place,” but he did not see “anything so very interesting or entertaining” in New York to encourage a permanent relocation there.¹ Although larger than Baltimore, New York did not compare favorably with the city at the head of the Patapsco, which, in Brooke’s estimation, held the best commercial prospects anywhere in America. His decision to relocate to Baltimore initially proved a good one—at least until early 1797 when his customers abandoned him.

The slump muffled trade during the normally busy spring season, and the dearth of shoppers continued into the lazier summer months. By fall 1797, there seemed to be no end in sight to the hard times. In a letter to his mother, Brooke admitted that whether economic conditions “will remain so or get better or worse I cannot tell.” He despaired that business “remained exceedingly dull,” and that “some days [I] do little or nothing at all.” Distraught by his predicament, Brooke did not know how to handle the situation, and the reverses at his shop quickly soured his judgment of the city. His friends assured

¹ Samuel Brooke to sister [Hannah], February 15, 1795, Brooke-Hopkins Letterbook, MS.150,

him “not to be discouraged for they are in the same way, having little or nothing to do but to sit at their store’s door and wish for better times.” Brooke found some solace in this, believing that things would have to turn around soon, “as the people . . . must buy necessities.”² As October came and went with few customers, however, all hope of a quick recovery dwindled away. What people deemed necessary had evidently changed during that dreadful year. By winter, it was clear that the steady and impressive growth of Baltimore, the most dynamic city of the new republic, had come to a shuddering halt—and no one knew when things might change.

The immediate cause of the city’s troubles occurred several thousands of miles away in the boardroom of the Bank of England. With the reluctant blessing of William Pitt, Great Britain’s conservative Prime Minister, the Bank’s directors suspended specie payments on February 27, 1797, triggering the Panic of 1797.³ The Bank’s decision disrupted access to the British gold and silver reserves that American merchants had relied on to finance the delicate web of Atlantic credit on which their fortunes rested. Mercantile difficulties soon rippled throughout the Atlantic world, and the effects of the Panic quickly reached the United States. Merchants were not alone in facing hard times. Shopkeepers and grocers who relied on the rising fortunes of the city’s overseas trade to stock their shelves and sell their wares found that fewer customers patronized their stores. Even artisans, whose success was intimately tied to the prosperity of the city as a whole, ultimately suffered economic setbacks.

MHS.

² Samuel Brooke to Mother [Mrs. Brooke], March 25, 1797, Brooke-Hopkins Letterbook, MHS.

³ Wilfred Marston Acres, *The Bank of England From Within, 1694-1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), I, 277.

The Panic of 1797 represented the republic's most severe economic crisis since the end of the American Revolution. Curiously though, most accounts of the early republic ignore the panic. There are reasons for the oversight. In America, the events of 1797 displayed few hallmarks of what normally constituted a "panic," at least in the way economists and historians have traditionally defined the term.⁴ The Panic of 1797 was not like the later Panics of 1819 or 1837 where thousands of individual fortunes evaporated overnight with the collapse of the nation's banking system. Instead, the Panic of 1797 began overseas and affected the mercantile sector of the economy first. The financial turmoil it created took several more months to unsettle the broader economy. Another obvious difference from other panics is that there were no "bank runs" in 1797. Indeed, Baltimore had only three banks, the last of which opened its doors for the first time on January 2, 1797, only a month before the British government began restricting specie payments.⁵ Finally, the economic downturn that followed the Panic of 1797 was neither as severe nor as long-lived as later depressions in the nineteenth century. If panics must result from structural, or at least internal problems within the nation's business cycle, and lead to a banking collapse and a prolonged depression, then the economic crisis of 1797 does not qualify as a "panic."

Despite the differences between the economic crisis of 1797 and those of 1819 and 1837, there were some interesting parallels. When the Bank of England suspended specie payments, the effect was much the same as when American banks suspended

⁴ For a discussion of what makes an economic crisis a "panic," see Charles Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

⁵ The Bank of Maryland, the city's branch of the Bank of the United States, and the newly-chartered Bank of Baltimore. See Denwood Kelly, Armand Shank, Jr., and Thomas Gordon, *Money & Banking in Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1996), II, 116.

payments in 1819 and 1837: commodity prices fell sharply, trade was disrupted, businesses failed, and a period of economic uncertainty followed. In 1797, the Bank of England acted almost like a surrogate national bank for the American economy thanks to the nation's neomercantilist dependence on foreign trade. There were other similarities. The later panics led to prolonged depressions, and for Baltimore, the commercial frustrations that began with the Panic lasted until the War of 1812. Hard times spurred the creation of new markets, a revolution in the use of newspapers, the construction of internal improvements, the rise of a new manufacturing class, and most important, a transformation of the city's traditional social order. Thus whether or not one refers to the economic crisis of 1797 as a true panic, it acted like one, and its long-term consequences led to sweeping cultural changes. The hard times of the 1790s proved just as critical to the development of Jeffersonian America as the Panic of 1819 and its subsequent depression were for Jacksonian America.⁶

THE PANIC OF 1797

The origins of the Bank of England's troubles may be traced to January 1795, when the armies of revolutionary France under the command of General Pichegru marched into the United Provinces. British observers in the Netherlands commented on

⁶ For the Panic of 1819 and its importance to Jacksonian America, see Samuel Reznick, "The Depression of 1819-1822: A Social History," *American Historical Review*, 39 (1933): 28-47; Murray Rothbard, *The Panic of 1819: Reactions and Policies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Gary Browne, "Baltimore and the Panic of 1819," in Aubrey Land, ed., *Law, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 212-227; Andrew Cayton, "The Fragmentation of 'A Great Family': The Panic of 1819 and the Rise of a Middling Interest in Boston, 1818-1822," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 2 (1982): 144-167; David Lehman, "Explaining Hard Times: Political Economy and the Panic of 1819 in Philadelphia" (Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1992); and Sarah Kidd, "'To be harassed by my Creditors is worse than Death': Cultural Implications of the Panic of 1819," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 95 (2000): 161-189.

the invasion's carnival-like atmosphere, and marveled afterwards that Dutch society seemingly maintained a sense of order despite the turmoil of conquest. The so-called orderly affairs of the low countries proved short-lived, however, as the conquering French imposed many hardships on the Batavian Republic—the revolutionary regime's new name for the United Provinces. The Dutch lost Flanders, Venlo, Roermond, and Maastricht to annexation. The French also demanded an indemnity of 100 million guilders, extorted Dutch bankers to make a large loan to the French government, and required the dismantling of all frontier defenses in the Netherlands. The results were devastating. Within months, political factions warred over the nature of the new republic's sovereignty while the nation's commerce laid paralyzed. Gin distilleries and prostitution quickly became the only booming industries in the country. The frequently exorbitant demands and requisitions made by French commanders in Dutch cities angered a populace already strapped by imposed hardships. When the maritime trade languished, widespread resentment of the French followed.⁷

The collapse of the Dutch economy did not by itself prove catastrophic to British commodity and financial markets. This was fortunate for Baltimore, because the city's mercantile community relied on access to British credit to conduct overseas trade. The city thus enjoyed continued prosperity in 1795 and 1796.⁸ However, the strategic threat

⁷ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1119-30. Also see I. Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Republic: History and Politics in the Dutch Republic, 1747-1800* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 220-61; Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 138-245; and Owen Connelly, *French Revolution, Napoleonic Era* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 153.

⁸ The lack of any real impact on Atlantic trade from the collapse of the Dutch economy should not be surprising. During most of the eighteenth century, the United Provinces weathered a profound decline in its fortunes, diminishing its importance within the Atlantic world. Except for the small triangle of cities formed by Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, where population

to Britain posed by the French conquest of the United Provinces did imperil British prosperity. The fall of an independent Dutch state removed a traditional check on French ambitions in Europe, and after 1795, the British government began borrowing heavily from the Bank of England to meet new wartime needs. As British depositors also withdrew large sums in advance of a possible invasion from the continent, the strain on the Bank of England's reserves quickly became intolerable. By the end of February 1797, gold and silver specie at the Bank had been reduced to only £1,100,000. With British reserves steadily deteriorating, the collapse of the Dutch economy suddenly became crucial. When coupled together, the financial troubles in London and Amsterdam placed enormous strain on the Atlantic economy, and commodity prices subsequently dropped sharply and unexpectedly in London in early 1797.⁹

The sudden downturn promised a gloomy period for Baltimore's export-driven economy, but the city's merchants and artisans expected the vagaries of international trade to occasionally cloud their prosperity. Few people in Baltimore consequently panicked about either the Bank of England's troubles or the collapse of commodity prices in London. Baltimore newspapers simply noted the events overseas and moved on to other matters. The financial unrest of early 1797 proved far more disastrous, however, than anyone on either side of the Atlantic could have predicted. The Bank of England's

stagnated for much of the eighteenth century, most other Dutch cities experienced significant de-urbanization after 1720. Leiden declined from a population of 70,000 in 1688 to only 31,000 in 1795, and Haarlem declined from a population of 50,000 to 21,000 in the same period. The withering of the textile industry in Leiden and Haarlem, coupled with the diminishing number of breweries and the decay of the maritime economy, had reduced the United Provinces to a shadow of its former glory. Jonathan I. Israel remarked that the "shrinkage, and deterioration, of the cities in the United Provinces is all the more dramatic when looked at against the background of the general trend in eighteenth-century Europe towards urbanization." See Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1011, 1006-18, and Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 24-45.

⁹ Acres, *The Bank of England From Within*, I, 269-75.

directors feared that another run against the Bank's reserves would render it insolvent. To prevent this dire scenario, the directors sent a deputation to William Pitt, the Prime Minister, asking "how far the Bank might venture to go on paying cash and when he thought it would be necessary to interfere." Pitt agreed to bring a resolution before Parliament calling for a restriction on the issuing of specie, but waited as long as possible before taking action. The Prime Minister recognized the danger of insolvency, but worried about the economic and political consequences of restricting specie payments. He changed his mind after the *London Gazette Extraordinary* reported on February 25 that a small group of French troops had apparently landed at Fishguard in Wales. Whether or not the story proved accurate, Pitt realized that the news might cause a general panic and provoke a disastrous run on the Bank. Having waited as long as possible before taking such radical action, Pitt finally acceded to the directors' wishes.¹⁰

For Baltimore's business community, the Bank of England's restrictions transformed a merely bothersome turn of events into a genuine economic emergency. By suspending specie payments, the Bank caused a severe contraction in available credit throughout the Atlantic world. At first it appeared that the crisis might be short-lived. In October 1797, the Bank of England's directors resolved that "the affairs of the Bank are in such a state that it can safely resume its accustomed functions." Hopes ran high in Baltimore that this improved situation might lead to a relaxation of the crippling restrictions, but Pitt's administration proved steadfast. Fiscal conservatism was the order of the day, as the British government was hunkering down for what they anticipated would be a long, expensive war against Napoleon. The interest rate on British public

¹⁰ Acres, *The Bank of England From Within*, I, 275-77.

securities subsequently doubled to 6 percent in 1798, the highest annual level recorded during the entire eighteenth century. Bankers on the continent reacted quickly. Dutch interest rates, usually the lowest in Europe, spiked to 10 percent, while French *rentes* rocketed to 34 percent.¹¹

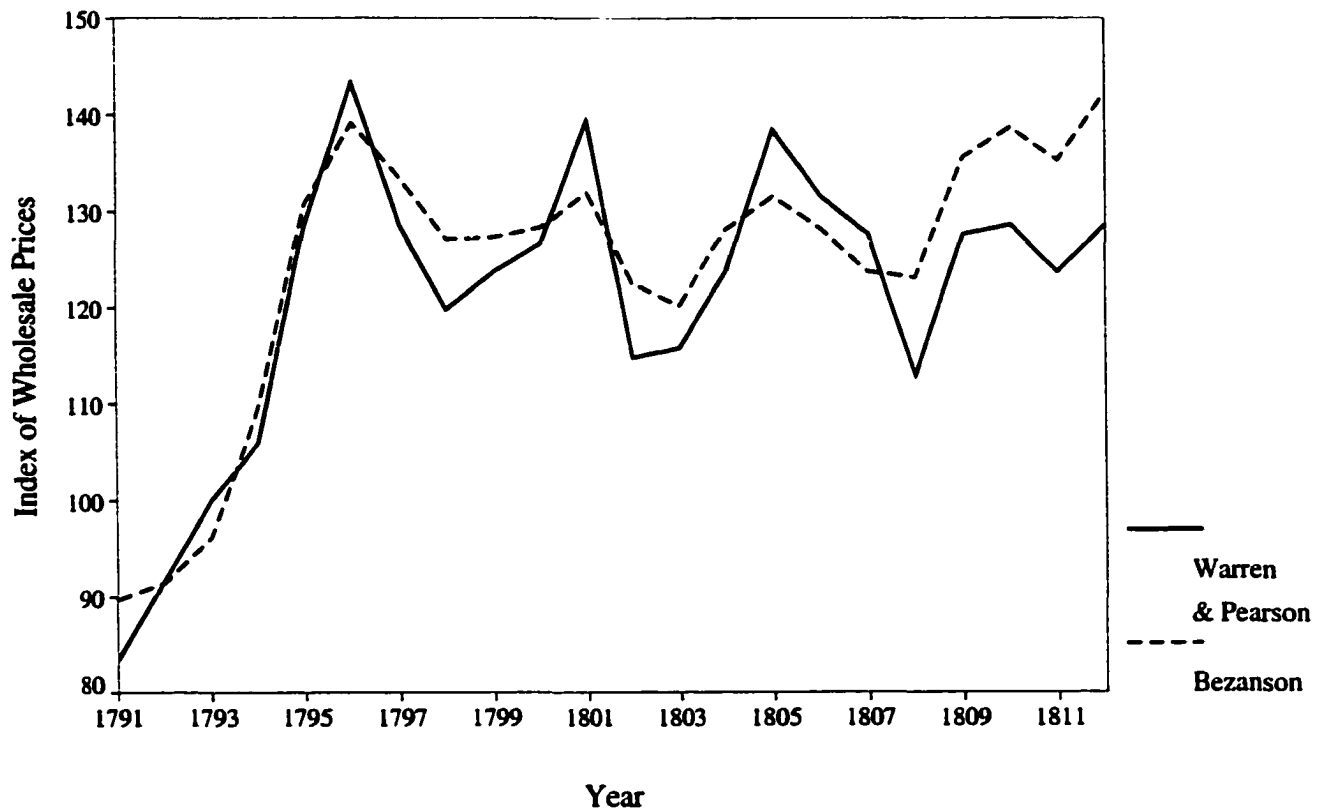
In Baltimore and throughout the United States, the financial troubles across the Atlantic wreaked havoc with commodity prices. Wholesale wheat prices in Maryland fell by almost 17 percent in 1797, and the value of the city's flour exports to the West Indies dropped from \$1,379,000 in 1796 to only \$1,038,000 in 1798. Flour exports to Europe experienced even worse results, plummeting from \$288,000 in 1796 to \$89,000 in 1797, and just \$19,000 by 1799.¹² As seen in Figure 5-1, the initially sharp drop in prices during the Panic was followed by a period of violent fluctuations that lasted until the War of 1812. Commodities primarily destined for overseas export suffered greater volatility than those typically traded on domestic markets. As seen in Figure 5-2, wholesale wheat prices in Maryland became highly erratic after 1797, while wholesale corn prices

¹¹ Bank of England's directors' resolution quoted in Acres, *The Bank of England From Within*, I, 282-83. For the changes in interest rates following the panic, see David Hackett Fischer, *The Great Wave: Price Revolutions and the Rhythm of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 129-30.

¹² For the value of Baltimore's flour exports see Geoffrey Gilbert, *Baltimore's Flour Trade to the Caribbean, 1750-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 126-27. For wheat and corn prices in Maryland, see Donald Adams, Jr., "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 46 (1986): 625-645. Beyond Baltimore, American exports suffered generally after the Panic of 1797. According to the Commerce Department, from a total of \$59 million in 1796, U.S. exports fell to \$51 million in 1797, and reached only \$61 million in 1798. The export figures reported by Adam Seybert in 1818 vary from the Commerce Department's figures, but the trend is the same. According to Seybert, U.S. exports equaled \$67 million in 1796 and dropped to \$56.8 million in 1797. Trade rebounded somewhat in 1798, rising to \$61.5 million. See U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), II, 886, and Adam Seybert, *Statistical Annals of the United States of America* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970; orig. 1818), 93.

Figure 5-1

Indices of Wholesale Prices in America, 1791-1812

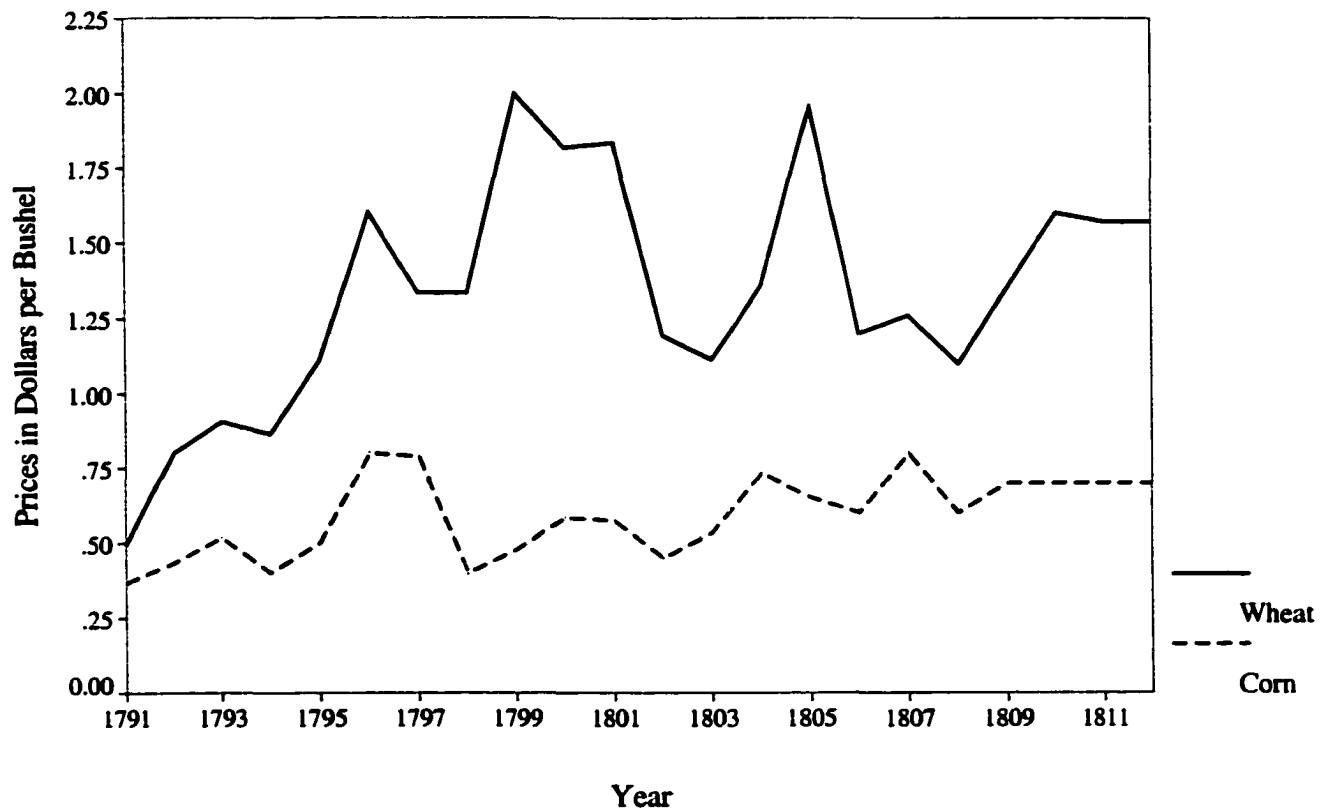


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), I, 202, 205.

Note: The Commerce Department figures are based on two older works: George Warren and Frank Pearson, *Wholesale Commodity Prices in the United States for 213 Years, 1720-1932* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1932), and Anne Bezanson, *Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, 1784-1861* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936).

Figure 5-2

Mid-Atlantic Grain Prices, 1791-1812



Sources: Donald Adams, Jr., "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," *Journal of Economic History*, 46 (1986): 644, and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), I, 209.

remained relatively steady.¹³

Baltimore's post-colonial dependence on foreign markets made its economy acutely vulnerable to the price volatility following the Panic, and those directly involved in maritime pursuits were the first to face the repercussions. Many wealthier mercantile firms, like Robert Oliver & Sons, were able to ride out temporary set-backs by relying upon a complex tangle of debt-financing schemes to survive. To pay for the importation of sugar from the West Indies, for example, the Olivers' agents in St. Croix drew bills worth £6,000 sterling on John and Thomas Kirwan of London. Unfortunately, the Olivers had sold most of their cargo on two and four months' credit, which meant that they could not reimburse the Kirwans in a timely fashion through the sale of their sugar. Robert Gilmor, another of Baltimore's affluent merchants, suggested that the Olivers borrow from the Amsterdam firm of Wilhelm and Jan Willinks to pay back the Kirwans. However, the Dutch proved averse to advancing any credit. The difficulties arising from the French conquest of the United Provinces were thus keenly felt in the Olivers' counting house.¹⁴

To secure the loan from the Willinks, the Olivers lied. Robert told the Willinks that he did not know how much the Kirwans "have occasion for," which was truthful, but he elaborated that they "will not require much if any *immediate* advances from you, as the Bills drawn on them for our account cannot fall due for some time." This was not

¹³ Baltimore did export corn, but the value of the trade in this commodity amounted to a fraction of the city's exports of tobacco, wheat, and flour. In 1791, Baltimore corn exports amounted to 227,520 bushels valued at \$82,084.73. This amounted to 26 percent of the value of the city's tobacco exports, and less than 8 percent of the value of the city's wheat and flour exports. Overall, corn accounted for less than 5 percent of the city's total exports. See *Maryland Journal*, March 2, 1792.

¹⁴ Stuart Bruchey, *Robert Oliver, Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 181-186.

completely honest, for on the same day, the Olivers assured the Kirwans of advancing them “two thirds of the value of this property immy [immediately].” The ploy worked and the Olivers were able to weather the panic. Despite such creative financial measures, the firm did not avoid severe indebtedness. By the end of 1797, the Olivers’ obligations exceeded their claims by more than \$48,000. Nevertheless, they were still in business.¹⁵

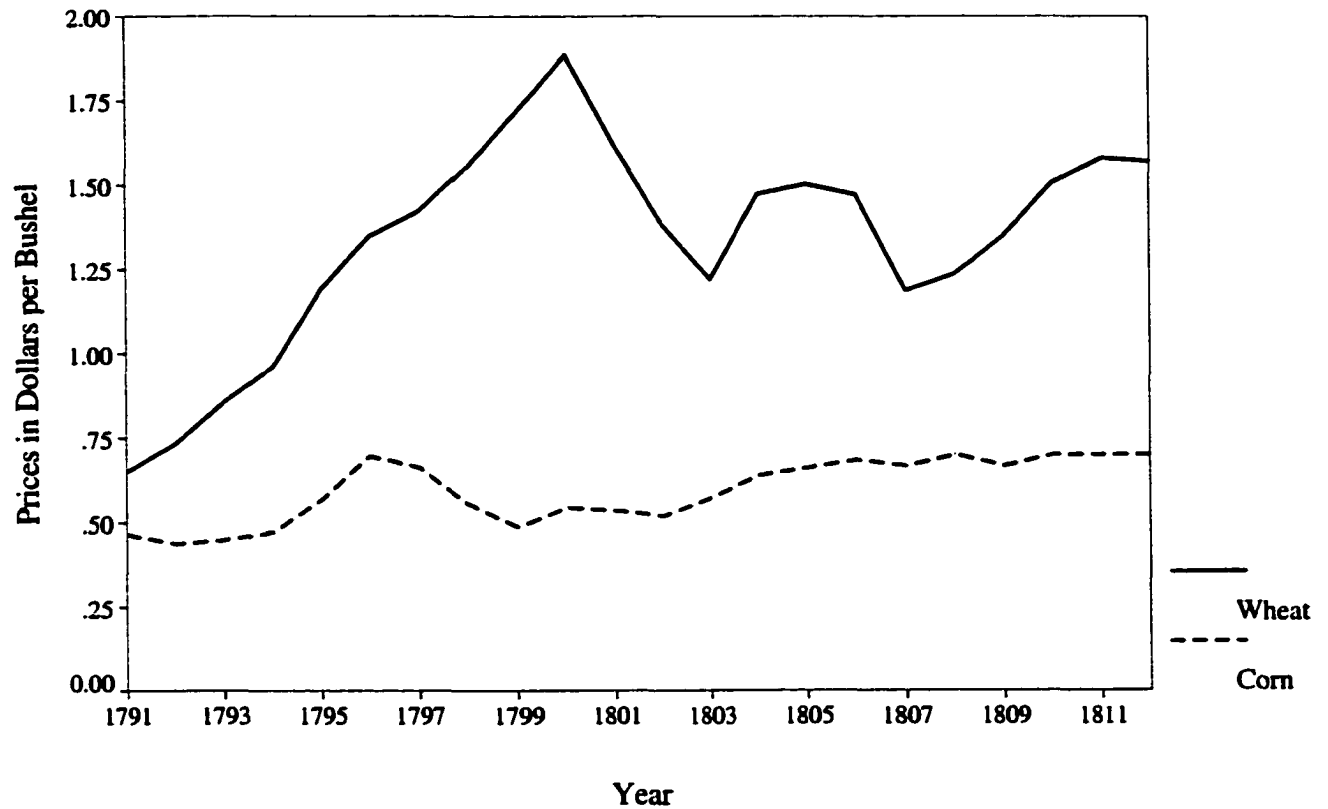
The experiences of Robert Oliver & Sons were not representative for most of Baltimore’s mercantile community. Although the depression following the Panic lasted only a few years, the commercial difficulties generated by the crisis continued to plague all but a few individuals engaged in overseas trade. American exports rebounded between 1800 and 1807, but only merchants with significant capital benefited from the revival of trade.¹⁶ Those with limited capital continued to face a deteriorating situation due to the wild fluctuations in commodity prices. Unable to draw on the types of reserves available to wealthier individuals, most Baltimore merchants struggled to meet their obligations to creditors when prices dropped suddenly. Despite the volatility, many smaller firms might have survived if the general trend in wheat prices had remained positive. Unfortunately, as seen in Figure 5-3, the three-year moving average for

¹⁵ Robert and John Oliver to John and Thomas Kirwan, May 18, 1797, and Robert and John Oliver to Wilhelm and Jan Willinks, May 18, 1797, both in *Oliver Record Books*, volume 3, MS.626.1, MHS. Stuart Bruchey, Robert Oliver’s most important biographer, is somewhat ambiguous, if not apologetic, about Oliver’s business ethics on this and many other issues. Bruchey submits that Baltimore’s mercantile culture “formed for Oliver a criterion of business right and business wrong which he, concerned as he was for the reputation of his house, could hardly ignore and did not.” Lying to a foreign creditor evidently fell within the boundaries of acceptable business behavior. From Robert Oliver’s perspective, his statements to the Willinks artfully deceived them without undermining his firm’s credibility. See Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 367.

¹⁶ See for example, Thomas and Samuel Hollingsworth to Levi Hollingsworth, August 18, 1803, *Hollingsworth Family Papers*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and Alexander Brown & Sons to William Cumming, October 12, 1803, *Alexander Brown & Sons Papers*, Library of Congress.

Figure 5-3

Three-Year Moving Avgs. on Mid-Atlantic Grain Prices, 1791-1812



Sources: Donald Adams, Jr., "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," *Journal of Economic History*, 46 (1986): 644, and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), I, 209.

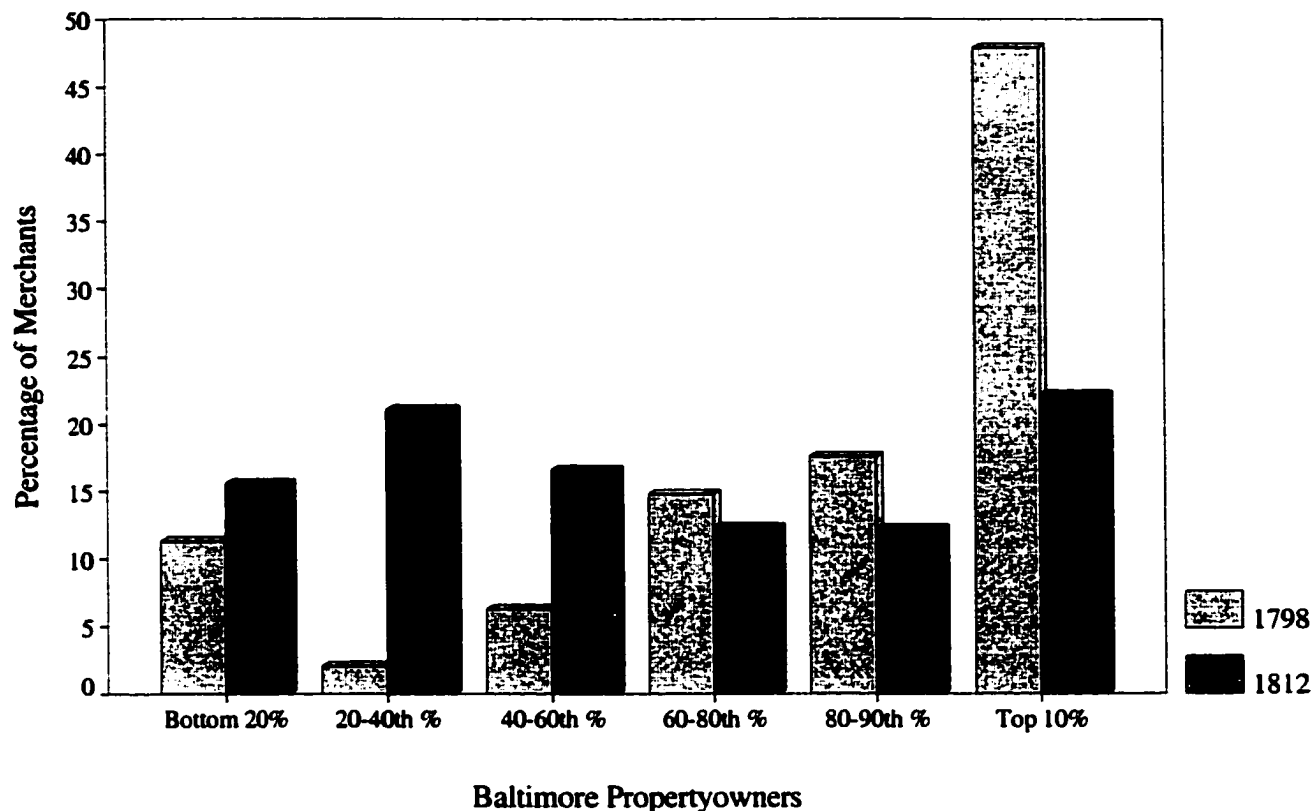
wholesale wheat prices in Maryland declined and then leveled off at a deflated level in the fifteen years after the Panic. Even savvy merchants found it difficult to manage in these circumstances without access to significant capital reserves.¹⁷

Thanks to the insolvency of so many marginal firms between 1797 and 1812, an increasingly smaller number of wealthy individuals were able to control an ever-greater percentage of the Baltimore's trade. As seen in Figure 5-4, the percentage of merchants in the poorest 40 percent of Baltimore property owners surged from 13 to 37 percent in this period, while the percentage of merchants among the top 10 percent of Baltimore property owners plummeted from 48 to 22 percent. Overall, merchants remained one of the most affluent occupational groups in the city, but this seeming prosperity obscured a growing inequality within their ranks. The wealthiest 10 percent of the city's merchants owned more than half of all the merchants' assessed property by 1812, compared to just over one-third in 1798. Baltimore's and the nation's seemingly improving trade figures for 1800-1807 are therefore quite deceptive. For those on the margins of the mercantile community, prosperity proved elusive after the Panic of 1797.

¹⁷ Adams, "Prices and Wages in Maryland, 1750-1850," 625-647. Although there is, not surprisingly, some variation from the Maryland numbers, wholesale commodity price indexes for Philadelphia, Charleston, and the United States reveal the same basic pattern seen for Maryland wheat: prices became very erratic after 1797 with the long-term trend being slightly deflationary in the decade-and-a-half following the Panic. See Donald Adams, Jr., "Wage Rates in the Early National Period: Philadelphia, 1785-1830," *Economic History Review*, 27 (1968): 404-426, and *Historical Statistics of the United States*, I, 201-202, 204-205, 209. The Census Bureau's numbers are based in part on three older studies: George Rogers Taylor, "Wholesale Commodity Prices at Charleston, 1796-1801," *Journal of Economic History*, 4 (1922): 848-867; G.F. Warren and F.A. Pearson, *Wholesale Commodity Prices in the United States for 213 Years, 1720-1932* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1932); and Anne Bezanson, *Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, 1784-1861* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936).

Figure 5-4

Property Distribution for Baltimore Merchants, 1798 and 1812



Sources: *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1800); *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812); Federal Direct Tax of 1798, Baltimore City, MS.807, Maryland Historical Society; and Baltimore City Property Tax Records, 1812 (microfilm), Baltimore City Archives.

Notes: Of the 537 merchants listed in the 1800 city directory, 142 were identified in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax record. Of the 284 merchants listed in the 1812 city directory, 90 were identified in the 1812 city property tax record.

THE QUASI-WAR

As if the financial distress caused by the Bank of England's restrictions were not enough to disrupt foreign trade, the Quasi-War with France further depressed the economy of an already beleaguered city. After the U.S. Senate ratified Jay's Treaty in 1795, the revolutionary regime in France grew increasingly belligerent toward the United States. Diplomatic hostility turned into an undeclared war after July 2, 1796, when a decree issued by the French Directory annulled the neutral shipping rights guaranteed by the Franco-American commercial treaty of 1778. The new law allowed French ships to seize any vessel carrying British goods, and to declare any American ship a lawful prize if the captain could not produce a properly ordered *rôle d'équipage*.¹⁸ American shipping losses mounted as French corsairs swarmed off U.S. coasts in search of prizes. By early 1797, the raids had become quite violent. In one instance, a French commander used thumbscrews to torture the captain of the *Cincinnatus*, a Baltimore ship, into declaring that his cargo was of English origin. The American captain refused to yield, but even his valiant resistance to such barbarism was insufficient to keep the French from plundering his ship anyway.¹⁹

Atrocities like those aboard the *Cincinnatus* convinced President John Adams to dispatch John Marshall, Elbridge Gerry, and Thomas Pinckney to Paris seek a redress of American grievances. Meanwhile, having no fleet to repel the molesting corsairs, the

¹⁸ A list of all crew and passengers.

¹⁹ Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 9, 17; Jerald Combs, *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 186-88; and Albert Hall Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality: Franco-American Diplomacy During the Federalist Era* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), 237-44.

government remained powerless to stop the French depredations. As a result, insurance rates on American shipping climbed steadily.²⁰ The Baltimore Insurance Company assessed an average rate of about 4 percent of the cargo's value for direct voyages, and 8 percent for voyages involving multiple ports in 1796. Average rates for the West Indian trade were marginally higher than for the trans-Atlantic or U.S. coastal trades, but the differences were very small. Higher rates were assessed for voyages to and from riskier locations, such as the Leeward and Windward Islands, but the biggest premium for any direct voyage in 1796 was only 12½ percent, and just 15 percent for voyages involving multiple ports. Robert Oliver believed that sharp-built schooners received better rates from insurers than other vessels, the Baltimore Insurance Company's policies demonstrated no bias toward a particular ship type or the person insured. Premiums were, of course, linked to the value of the ship's cargo, but insurance rates varied almost entirely upon the number of ports included in the policy, and where the ship would be sailing. Although Oliver may have been aware of some minor variations, the differences he perceived must have been very small.²¹

Premiums with the Baltimore Insurance Company increased dramatically in 1797.

²⁰ Congress approved the building of six frigates in 1794, but construction ceased in 1795 after the Washington administration reached a peace accord with the Barbary pirates. A supplementary act in 1796 authorized the completion of the three most advanced vessels, including the thirty-six gun *Constellation* under construction in Baltimore. Although Congress entrusted the construction of the *Constellation* to David Stodderd, a Baltimore ship builder, much of the credit for the ship's advanced progress belonged to Captain Thomas Truxton, a former privateer during the Revolution and the designated commander of the *Constellation*. Unfortunately, the Navy would not receive the first of these new frigates until Summer 1798. See Howard Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy: The Ships and their Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 118-32; Kenneth Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 29-43; and Michael Crawford and Christine Hughes, *The Reestablishment of the Navy, 1787-1801* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1995), 6-7.

²¹ Baltimore Insurance Company Account Book, MS.77, MHS, and Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 106.

The threat of French seizures doubled average rates overall to 8½ percent for direct voyages, and nearly 16 percent for voyages to multiple ports. The inflation of insurance premiums suggests that the Quasi-War had a chilling effect on the city's commerce, but the increases were very uneven depending on where a ship was headed. With the main elements of the French battle fleet either sailing in the Mediterranean, or bottled up by the British Home Fleet in the eastern Atlantic, the French concentrated their efforts against Americans in the West Indies. French corsairs thus proved most effective against only a fraction of American commerce, and Americans trading in the West Indies suffered the most.²²

The troubled tale of Edward Hall, a Baltimore merchant in aux Cayes, St. Domingo, illustrates the extraordinary measures often required to prosecute trade in the West Indies during the Quasi-War. In August 1798, Hall wrote that aux Cayes "is almost deserted since the arrangements taken in America relative to France. Provision[s] & Dry Goods [are] very scarce," causing prices to rise, while those for "produce [are] falling." Conditions deteriorated even further by early 1799. In a letter to William Wise, a ship captain, Hall groused that "our situation becomes daily more disagreeable—since the intercourse with America has been stoped [sic.], everything has become extremely scarce & dear." Hall lamented that the island's economy was reduced to a subsistence level as "every person waits the return . . . of the Americans." He was sure that until then, locals would continue to "only buy from hand to mouth."²³

²² Baltimore Insurance Company Account Book, MHS.

²³ Edward Hall to Phillips & Corsen, August 22, 1798, Edward Hall to Captain William Wise, March 10, 1799, and Edward Hall to Duncan & McIntosh, May 31, 1799, in Edward Hall Papers, MS.1300, MHS.

Signs of relief seemed to appear in June 1799. Hall confided to John Johnson, a ship captain, that he had received a letter from David Stewart of Baltimore that claimed “communication would without doubt be soon opened between America & St. Domingo.” Stewart evidently requested that Hall “invest all my fund in produce.” At the time, Hall was an agent for a business association between Stewart, Stewart’s son, and James Williams, another Baltimore merchant. Acting on the hopeful letter, the ambitious agent acquired 199 hogsheads of sugar, 120,000 pounds of Coffee, 35,000 pounds of cotton, and 630 barrels of flour “under the speculative idea that the intercourse would shortly take place.” He confided to Johnson that “should it prove otherwise, I shall be ruined, unless some mode can be adopted to get the produce out of the country.” This was no exaggeration. In order to purchase the massive cargo, Hall withdrew thirteen bills of exchange against David Stewart & Sons amounting to more than \$24,000. Unless he could sell the cargo quickly, he would have no way of remitting the balances due.²⁴

When the promised opening to America failed to materialize by late July, Hall began to panic. In a letter to David Stewart, Hall asserted that he “was firmly persuaded by the tenor of your [Stewart’s] Letters & those of others, from the prevailing opinion & from a variety of concurring circumstances, that he trade would have been opened long ere this.” If he had known otherwise, he “would not have drawn on you [David Stewart & Sons] for such an amount without a certainty of placing sufficient funds in your hands to reimburse you.”²⁵

The drama dragged on for months without resolution until Hall developed an

²⁴ David Hall to Captain John Johnson, June 30, 1799, and Edward Hall to David Stewart & Sons, July 26, 1799, in Edward Hall Papers, MHS.

²⁵ Edward Hall to David Stewart & Sons, July 26, 1799, Edward Hall Papers, MHS.

elaborate intrigue to funnel the slowly rotting produce to the Dutch island of Curaçao. Realizing that an American cargo would likely be seized and condemned, Hall conspired with several others to mask both the cargo's ownership and the identity of the party to whom it was consigned. First, he placed the 630 barrels of flour (valued at almost \$16,000) and 848 bags of coffee (valued at more than \$15,000) on the Danish schooner *Holstein*. As a neutral vessel, the *Holstein* was less likely to be subject to seizure by the French. Next, the ship's accounts of January 18, 1800 showed that the cargo was being shipped to Curaçao for Patrick Wood, a British merchant in St. Thomas, on consignment to the Dutch firm of Philips & Cursor. In reality, Hall had consigned the cargo to Wood for sale to Philips & Cursor. This subterfuge masked the ultimate ownership of the cargo, but it also meant that Hall, and by extension, his business partners in Baltimore, were now liable to Wood. From Jacquemel, James Williams wrote Hall that the plan was acceptable, but warned Hall that on or about January 1, 1800, David Stewart & Sons had gone out of business, and thus not to place any further cargoes on either his or the Stewarts' accounts.²⁶

Hall's intricate scheme quickly unraveled. When the *Holstein* reached Curaçao, Philips & Cursor only purchased 485 bags of coffee. The Dutch merchants complained that "a considerable quantity [of coffee]. . . is much damaged and we fear totally spoiled." This meant that Wood would be short nearly \$5,000 for the coffee, and that Williams and the Stewarts would ultimately be responsible to Wood to make up for the

²⁶ Complaint of Williams & Hillen against Edward Hall, David Stewart, and David C. Stewart in Baltimore County Court, July 15, 1809; *Holstein* account of January 18, 1800 (Document No. 7); and Affidavit of David Stewart to Lords Commissioners (Documents, pgs. 48-50), all in Williams vs. Hall Record Book, MS.910, MHS. The exact value of the flour was \$15,796.70, and the exact value of the coffee, which amounted to 117,578 pounds, was \$15,221.16.

shortfall. Disregarding Williams's letter, Hall agreed to allow Woods to consign almost \$2,500 in rum, salt, wine and other goods aboard the *Holstein* to him on Stewart's account. Hall clearly hoped that a profitable return on that cargo might balance the account with Woods. The remaining coffee, as well as \$1,500 in specie, was loaded onto a separate ship, the *Penelope*, and both vessels sailed for St. Thomas. Although the *Holstein* arrived safely in St. Thomas, the *Penelope* was seized by a British frigate, appropriately named the *Surprise*, and diverted to Jamaica where she was condemned by the British Vice Admiralty Court.²⁷

Williams did not discover the unfortunate outcome of the affair for another year. He had removed from Jacquemel to Cuba and from there to Baltimore. Finding the Yellow Fever ravaging the population, he remained in the countryside until 1801. When he finally returned to the city, he received Hall's letter of August 6, 1800 asking him for payment for all balances due to Patrick Woods. Williams was incensed. In his opinion, Hall had no right to undertake the second voyage, and he refused to accept Hall's accounting. Hall shot back that he could not "suppose that you were either serious in your proper senses," and that "on a mature consideration of the subject you will totally disavow the sentiment." Instead of resolving the matter privately, both parties agreed to institute reciprocal suits against the other in Baltimore County Court. The case dragged on for several years, but in 1808, the county court decided in Hall's favor. Williams and Stewart were ordered to pay \$12,500 to Hall. The decision was partially reversed in

²⁷ Complaint of Williams & Hillen against Edward Hall, David Stewart, and David C. Stewart in Baltimore County Court, July 15, 1809; *Holstein* accounts, March 22, 1800 (Documents Nos. 9 and 12); John Cursor to Patrick Wood, July 27, 1800 (Document No. 10); and Affidavit of David Stewart to Lords Commissioners (Documents, pgs. 48-50), all in Williams vs. Hall Record Book, MHS.

Chancery Court in 1816, when Judge William Kitty ordered Hall to pay back \$7,359.55 to Williams.²⁸

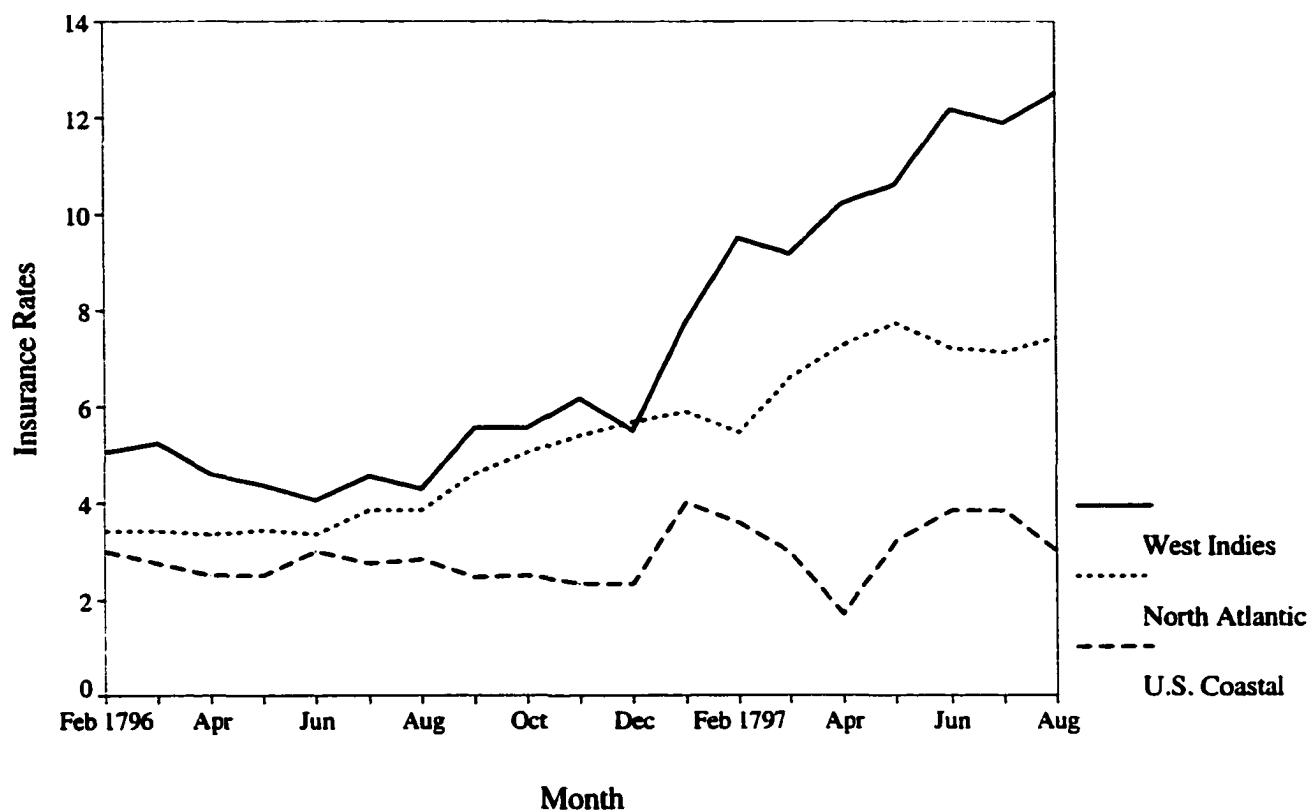
Although the story of Edward Hall's intrigue and its painful outcome make a compelling case study of the Quasi-War's impact on American trade, such troubled tales proved the exception rather than the rule for Baltimore trade overall. As seen in Figure 5-5, the threat of French seizures tripled average rates for direct voyages to and from the West Indies to 12 percent. Yet the average rates on direct voyages across the Atlantic had only doubled by the end of 1797, and the effect on the U.S. coastal trade was negligible.²⁹ The possible French menace in the Atlantic did succeed in making American merchants nervous, but this only discouraged the practice of insuring both legs of a trans-Atlantic voyage at once. Almost 40 percent of the Baltimore Insurance Company's policies on trans-Atlantic voyages in 1796 covered the vessel's return trip; this percentage fell to just 13 percent in 1797. Yet the total number of policies for trans-Atlantic commerce doubled, suggesting that anxiety over seizures did not lead to a diminution of trade, only a change in tactics. Although merchants hedged their risks,

²⁸ Complaint of Williams & Hillen against Edward Hall, David Stewart, and David C. Stewart to Baltimore County Court, July 15, 1809; Verdict of the Honorable William Kitty in the case Williams & Hillen against Edward Hall, David Stewart, and David C. Stewart, Maryland High Court of Chancery, February 29, 1816; Edward Hall to James Williams, August 6, 1800 (Document No. 17); and Edward Hall to James Williams, May 18, 1802, all in Williams vs. Hall Record Book, MHS.

²⁹ Baltimore Insurance Company Account Book, MHS. In 1797, the Baltimore Insurance Company's rates exceeded 20 percent for voyages to and from the Windward Islands, and climbed as high as one-third of the cargo's value for a few voyages to the West Indies. In 1798, insurance rates reportedly climbed as high as 30 percent on trans-Atlantic voyages and 40 percent for the West Indies. During the worst days of the Quasi-War, rates may have occasionally gone even higher. See the chart on insurance notes in Nathan Sargeant, "The Quasi-War with France," *The United Service*, 9 (1883): 11; John Forbes, *Israel Thorndike, Federalist Financier* (New York: Beverly Historical Society by Exposition Press, 1953), 45; DeConde, *The Quasi-War*, 124-25; and Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 243.

Figure 5-5

Three-Month Moving Avgs. on Insurance Rates by Destination



Source: Baltimore Insurance Company Account Book, MS.77, Maryland Historical Society.

they still plunged full ahead with their planned voyages. For the U.S. coastal trade, the threat of seizures resulted in greater volatility, but rates remained essentially the same in 1797 as in 1796.³⁰

The importance of the Quasi-War to the hard times of the late 1790s can be easily exaggerated. Unlike the financial troubles associated with the Panic that effected every part of society, the limited war primarily tormented merchants whose interests were tied to the West Indies. Merchants engaged in the trans-Atlantic trade did not suffer the same hardships as those trading in the West Indies. The limited French naval forces in the western Atlantic concentrated their efforts in the West Indies, and were largely inconsequential to the rest of American commerce.

Baltimore merchants undertook relatively few voyages in 1798, but it would be a mistake to conclude that seizures and higher insurance premiums resulting from the Quasi-War accounted for the decline in commercial activity. The threat of seizure did not unnerve them. Merchants in the late eighteenth century demonstrated an eagerness to undertake bold initiatives in trade, and if they had possessed available funds, many would have surely continued to brave the troubles on the high seas. Herein lied the real problem. The crushing debts incurred after the Panic of 1797 bludgeoned the city's vigorous spirit of enterprise, forcing many otherwise intrepid individuals to reconsider their risks. The Olivers were in debt by almost \$50,000 by 1798 thanks to the financial turmoil begun in London, and could have ill-afforded to loose a vessel to the French under those circumstances. Most other merchant houses and partnerships in Baltimore faced the same problems. It was for this reason that the Olivers counseled a friend to "lay

³⁰ Baltimore Insurance Company Account Book, MHS.

by untill you see how matters are likely to turn,” as “the times are alarming & the People here seem disposed to do little or no business until a Change takes place.”³¹ The Quasi-War had done relatively little to deter the city’s leading merchants, but the financial troubles across the Atlantic had severely dampened their sense of adventure.

The added commercial difficulties posed by the French did not last very long in any case. On April 27, 1798, Congress authorized the Navy to buy and refit merchant vessels for active duty. The first two vessels purchased on May 3 included a Baltimore ship named the *Adriana*, which the Navy re-christened *Baltimore* in honor of the city. Within the next two months, the Navy transferred eight revenue cutters from the Department of Treasury, purchased four more merchant vessels, and welcomed the completed forty-four gun frigate *United States* to the fleet. Almost overnight, the new nation possessed a naval force capable of sweeping the American coasts of molesting corsairs.³² By early 1799, the tables had been fully turned on the French, as the Americans took the offensive in the West Indies. The most spectacular triumph came on February 9 near the island of Nevis, when the Baltimore-built *Constellation*, under the command of Captain Thomas Truxton, captured the French frigate *L’Insurgente*. The

³¹ Robert and John Oliver to W. Wowry, March 10, 1798, Oliver Record Books, volume 3, MS.626.1, MHS. Also see Gary Lawson Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation, 1789-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) 30, 92, and Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 187. Editorials on June 18 and November 4, 1799, and August 18, 1800 in the *Baltimore American* also show that the debts incurred during Panic, rather than the seizures in the Quasi-War, were responsible for the city’s lackluster commerce.

³² The naval build-up also included several “presentation vessels” built through private subscriptions. During the summer of 1798, Baltimoreans contributed over \$100,000 toward the completion of two eighteen-gun sloops of war. The ships were named *Patapsco* and *Maryland*, and were delivered to the Navy in 1799. See Chapelle, *The American Sailing Navy*, 140-73; Hagan, *The Making of American Sea Power*, 42-53; Crawford and Hughes, *The Reestablishment of the Navy*, 7-11; and Frederick Leiner, “The Baltimore Merchants’ Warships: *Maryland* and *Patapsco* in the Quasi-War with France,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 88 (1993), 261-84.

victory proved especially sweet in the United States, as *L'Insurgente* had previously taken several American prizes. Thanks to these efforts, insurance rates plummeted in late 1799, and returned to their 1796 levels by Spring 1800. The Quasi-War itself continued for another year, but thereafter proved of very little consequence to American commerce.³³ The repercussions from the Panic did not dissipate as quickly as the French threat.

CONTINUED FRUSTRATIONS

Like the city's merchants, retailers were also among the first to feel the pinch of the financial crisis. As early as October 1797, Samuel Brooke's mother sensed that her son's economic frustrations would continue for some time. She wrote Samuel of having "been much exercised about thy present situation," and "wished [that] after I had parted with thee that I had urged thy closing thy business in Baltimore as quick as possible." She feared that in the wake of the commercial downturn, her son's shop would "not do to procure a liveing." She urged him to return to the countryside, and promised that if "thee and Sally," Samuel's fiancée, "should accomplish your intended union," the couple could stay at the family's farm. Knowing that her son might object, fearing that he would become a burden, Samuel's mother assured him that the newly-weds would certainly pose no inconvenience. After all, Samuel still had "one cow to give milk and another for

³³ Gardner Allen, *Our Naval War with France* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 84, 103, and DeConde, *The Quasi-War*, 130. Neither President John Adams nor Benjamin Stoddert, a former Georgetown merchant and the newly-appointed Secretary of the Navy, intended the American offensive in the Caribbean to be an overture to a formal declaration of war. Both men considered protecting commerce and defending the nation from invasion to be the only proper uses for the Navy in a republic. See Robert Jones, "The Naval Thought and Policy of Benjamin Stoddert, First Secretary of the Navy, 1798-1801," *American Neptune*, 24 (1964): 61-69, and Robert Smith, "Keeping the Republic: Ideology and the Diplomacy of John Adams, James Madison, and John

beef,” and “with other things thee has laid in here I think thee might winter here without being beholden to my body.”³⁴ As the situation in Baltimore continued to deteriorate in the autumn, Mrs. Brooke waited impatiently for her son’s decision. She didn’t have to wait long. By Christmas, Samuel accommodated her wishes by quitting his business in Baltimore and returning home.

While merchants and shopkeepers scrambled to save their businesses during the summer of 1797, George Littig continued to enjoy a lively trade at his hat store on North Gay Street.³⁵ As an artisan selling primarily to locals, Littig benefited from the insulation the household economy temporarily provided his shop from the international credit crunch. Hard times descended soon enough. By spring 1798, the effects of the downturn could be seen by walking down nearly any street in the city. Unlike Brooke, however, Littig tried to muddle through the economic slump as best he could—at least for a little while longer.

Surviving the lean years of the late 1790s proved very difficult, as the sales figures for Littig’s hat shop illustrate. As seen in Figure 5-6, in 1798 and 1799, revenues for January through May, the busiest season in the eighteenth-century urban economy, did not keep pace with those of 1797. The busy spring season began also ending sooner and more definitively in the early summer months of 1798-1799. Littig tried to compensate for the “soft market” by making fewer expensive hats. The number of “fashionable” hats thus declined in favor of heavy “castor” hats made from either beaver

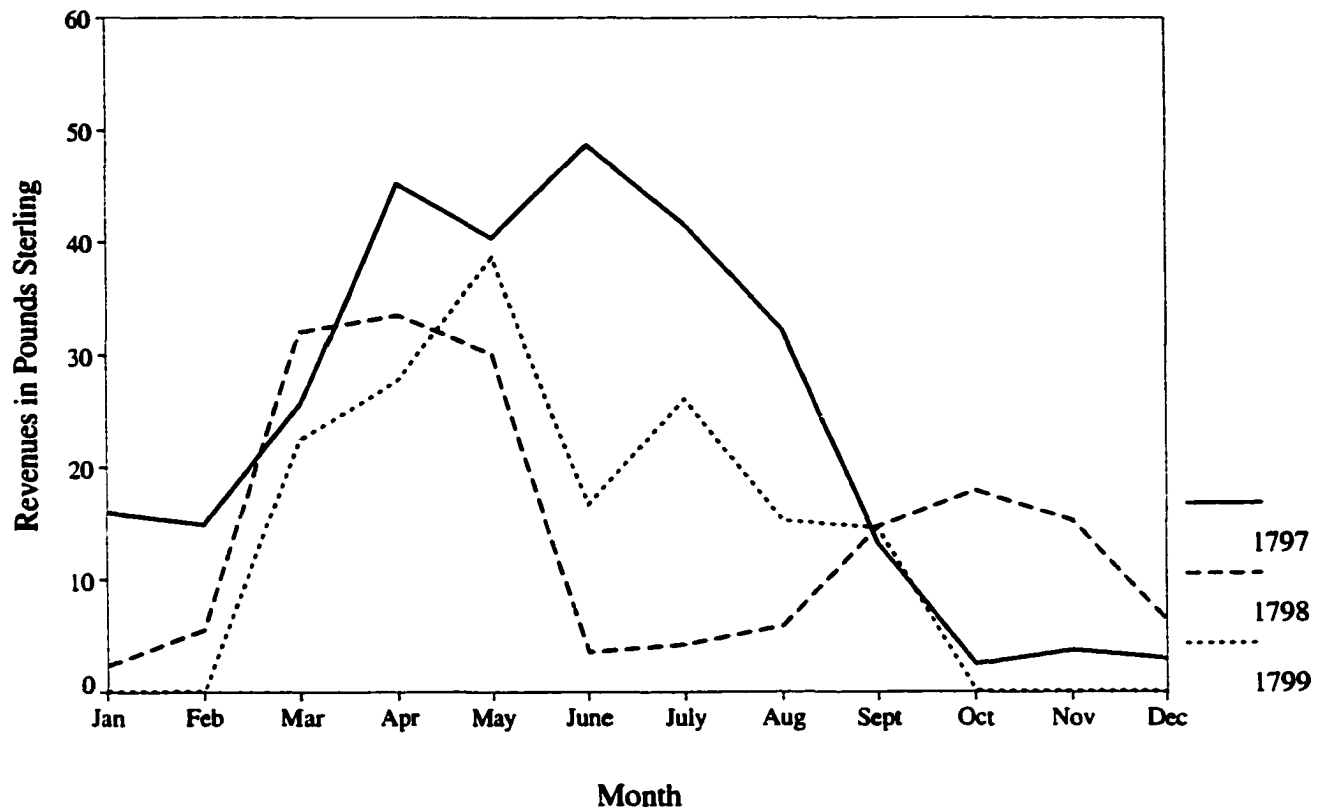
Quincy Adams” (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1997), 132-33, 139.

³⁴ Mother [Mrs. Brooke] to Sammy [Samuel Brooke], October 15, 1797, Brooke-Hopkins Letterbook, MHS.

³⁵ John Mullin, *The Baltimore Directory, for 1799* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1799), 42.

Figure 5-6

Monthly Revenues from Hat Sales at Littig's Store, 1797-1799



Source: George Littig Ledger, MS.1657, Maryland Historical Society.

or rabbit fur. Unfortunately, the strategy didn't work, and revenues tumbled from £265 in 1797 to just £170 in 1798.³⁶

Desperate to find a strategy that would save his business, George Littig switched direction once again in 1799. Taking advantage of the militia craze that swept Baltimore during the Quasi-War with France, he decided to make more military hats. Although Baltimore still faced hard times, Littig clearly hoped that customers interested in purchasing military hats would do so regardless of the price. The gamble hinged on what Littig perceived to be an inelasticity of demand for a specific product, and his instincts proved correct. Unfortunately, even this ploy could not fully arrest his deteriorating situation. The 6 percent decline in sales during 1799 proved less severe than the previous year's collapse, but Littig's revenues had withered by 40 percent over the two disastrous years. By early 1800, Littig's efforts ended in failure as his hat store finally went out of business.³⁷

For many Baltimoreans, it seemed that only relief from across the Atlantic could end the hard times. Rumors circulated almost continuously in these years about a possible change in British policy. In January 1798, with commodity prices continuing to plummet, the *Baltimore Federal Gazette* reported that "the cash and bullion at present in the bank [of England] are . . . much above what they have been at any time since September 1795." Unfortunately for Baltimore's anxious population, William Pitt's government still proved reluctant to make any policy changes. With no end in sight to the credit crunch, the *Gazette* lamented that "the restrictions imposed upon payments"

³⁶ George Littig Ledger, MS.1657, MHS.

³⁷ George Littig Ledger, MHS.

would continue indefinitely. The prospect of relief peaked once again in February 1798 when the *Gazette* reported that “the bank was in such a state of affluence, as to be ready to pay all demands on it in specie.” Wild stories circulated throughout Baltimore “that the great inconvenience arising from the present scarcity of silver” had caused a great agitation for coinage in London. For the moment, it appeared that Pitt’s government might buckle under the pressure of public opinion. Once again, however, hope vanished when the British government refused to yield and the restrictions continued.³⁸

By winter 1799, many merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans found themselves drowning in debts with little chance of rescue. Local credit had to be expanded in order for many Baltimore firms to survive. Unfortunately, none of Baltimore’s three banks proved even slightly helpful. Instead of placing the needs of the community first, the bank directors decided to protect their own interests by contracting credit. The Baltimore branch of the Bank of the United States had usually followed rather miserly policies in extending credit, but it proved especially stingy during the Panic. The ratio between the bank’s notes in circulation and its specie reserves between 1792 and 1800 was normally rather low compared to other institutions. During the worst days of the crisis, however, this ratio dropped to 0.96, which meant that the value of the bank’s notes in circulation was actually *less* than the value of its specie reserves. The financial burdens produced by

³⁸ *Baltimore Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, January 25, 1798, and February 20, 1798. The cautious approach by Pitt’s government turned out to be a prescient decision. The Panic of 1797 marked the worst collapse of prices the Atlantic world faced during what David Hackett Fischer has described as the long-term price inflation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Fischer identified Paris in 1729 as the epicenter of this long-term increase in prices. The inflation began slowly during the mid-eighteenth century, but emerged as a clearly visible trend throughout the Atlantic world by the 1760s and 1770s. The trend continued until the Panic of 1797-1798, which ushered in a temporary stabilization between 1801 and 1805. Prices rocketed once again between 1805 and 1820 until they reached what Fischer called the “Victorian equilibrium” of the nineteenth century. See Fischer, *The Great Wave*, 117-56.

the banks' tight-fisted policies proved too much for many firms, and in early 1800, many of the city's most prominent businesses finally cracked under the strain. Even Adrian Valck, the Willinks' agent in Baltimore, failed during these desperate months.³⁹

Those who remained hopeful that a new year might bring an end to hard times soon discovered otherwise. On August 22, 1800, the *Federal Gazette* reported what those in Fell's Point already knew: "we find an inflammatory bilious fever now exists—it first made its appearance on the water next to the cove . . . and thence spread in various directions" throughout the city. The "bilious fever" was yellow fever, the recurrent scourge that had become an endemic problem for America's seaport cities. Likely transmitted by the *aedes aegypti*, a species of mosquito inadvertently brought from Africa to America in the seventeenth century, yellow fever spread quickly in congested urban spaces like Baltimore, which had an overall population density of approximately 33,000 people per square mile in 1800. Public health officials in American seaports had battled outbreaks of the disease throughout the 1790s, but from mid August until late October, the disease often reached epidemic proportions.⁴⁰

The *Federal Gazette* attributed 1,197 deaths to the Yellow Fever outbreak of 1800, or nearly 5 percent of the city's total population.⁴¹ Fell's Point proved especially

³⁹ Stuart and Eleanor Bruchey, *Money & Banking in Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1996), I, 15-16, and Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation*, 247 n.19.

⁴⁰ *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, August 22, 1800. For Baltimore's struggles against Yellow Fever see William Travis Howard, Jr., *Public Health Administration and the Natural History of Disease in Baltimore, Maryland, 1797-1820* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute, 1924), and Douglas Stickler, "Death and Class in Baltimore: The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1800," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 74 (1979): 282-299. For Baltimore's population density see Carole Shammas, "The Space Problem in Early United States Cities," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 57 (2000): 509.

⁴¹ An equivalent outbreak in Baltimore in 2000 would have claimed more than 30,000 lives.

vulnerable to the epidemic. Its marshy areas provided excellent breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and its population density likely exceeded 60,000 people per square mile, making it easy for the insects to spread the disease rapidly.⁴² Public health officials, who did not understand how the fever was contracted or how it spread, often blamed the poverty and immorality of the disease's victims. John Weatherburn, who lived through several epidemics in Baltimore, concluded that yellow fever thrived "in those parts inhabited by the lower order of the people, where cleanliness is not duly attended to, and where their diet and drink is not of the most wholesome kind." Due in part to this type of prejudice, doctors were thus slow to address the needs of the working poor who made up the majority of the Fell's Point population. Yellow fever claimed approximately 15 percent of the residents in Fell's Point in 1794, while nearly one in four succumbed during an outbreak in 1797. Not surprisingly, half of those who died in Baltimore from the disease in 1800 were from Fell's Point, and almost 80 percent were located in the least affluent area east of Jones' Falls.⁴³

⁴² *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, October 29, 1800, and Shammass, "The Space Problem in Early United States Cities," 511-23. The 1800 census lacks a breakdown of Baltimore's population by ward, making it impossible to provide exact figures for the population densities in different parts of the city. Using the 1798 Federal Direct Tax, however, Shammass concluded that Baltimore's population likely clustered into the settled areas of the city with developed waterfronts, just as the populations in Philadelphia and New York did. Shammass further observed that the average size of a houselot in Baltimore was 6,931 square feet, but the average size of a houselot in Fell's Point was only 2,504 square feet. In wards 4, 5, and 6 the average was 2,604 square feet, and in wards 2 and 3, the average size was 2,148 square feet. Based on the wards' location long the waterfront and the smaller average sizes of their houselots, they likely represented the most crowded parts of the city. In equivalent areas of Philadelphia along the Delaware River waterfront, population densities ranged from 46,562 in the Dock ward to 92,862 in the Chestnut ward. In New York, the equivalent areas included wards 1 through 5, where population density ranged from 51,675 to 85,987. Assuming that the population densities for specific parts of Baltimore were similar to equivalent areas of Philadelphia and New York, the population density of Fell's Point in 1800 likely exceeded 60,000, and may have ranged as high as 90,000 people per square mile.

⁴³ John Weatherburn Collection, MS.44, Letterbook #119, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The

In addition to the profound human tragedy caused by the weight of so much death, a yellow fever outbreak also represented an economic catastrophe for Baltimore. Fearful that news of an epidemic would provoke a mass exodus from the city, the editors of the *Federal Gazette* waited as long as possible before printing the report. With 15 people already dead and approximately 112 more infected by August 22, the editors could delay no longer. Within days, hundreds of stores, workshops, and businesses closed, and those who could afford to leave the city fled to the countryside. Baltimore's already beleaguered economy came to a virtual standstill. For laborers, the disappearance of a substantial portion of the city's employers made the increasingly dismal prospects for earning a wage even worse. Unable to leave and disproportionately represented east of Jones Falls, laborers also faced the worst of the epidemic itself. Their troubles continued into the winter of 1800-1801, as the needs of families devastated by disease and loss strained the city's existing capacity to provide for the poor.⁴⁴

THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

Without any sign of relief from across the Atlantic, only extraordinary measures could keep the city from falling further into depression. Archibald Campbell, ironically the former President of the penurious Baltimore branch of the Bank of the United States,

Johns Hopkins University, Special Collections; quoted in Seth Rockman, "Working for Wages in Early Republic Baltimore: Unskilled Labor and the Blurring of Slavery and Freedom," (Ph.D., University of California at Davis, 1999), 54. For mortality figures, see Howard, *Public Health in Baltimore*, 212-214, and Stickle, "Death and Class in Baltimore," 284-88, 294-96. Stickle counted 846 internments east of Jones' Falls for August 20 through October 14, 1800, and only 235 internments west of Jones Falls for the same period. During each of the nine weeks of the epidemic, internments were far greater east of Jones Falls.

⁴⁴ *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, August 22, 1800; Stickle, "Death and Class in Baltimore," 288-94; and Rockman, "Working for Wages," 53-55, 58-60.

organized an “Association of Relief” in January 1800. This ad-hoc organization brought together the few insurance companies, mercantile firms, and individuals unaffected by the Panic in an effort to halt business failures. Campbell’s effort yielded impressive results. In a letter signed by twenty-one firms and published in the *Baltimore Federal Gazette* in January 1800, Walter Muschett’s creditors publicly declared that “the management of [his] business should be left entirely to [him],” and “we make no doubt but [Muschett] will be able to fully satisfy every claim . . . in a reasonable time.” Such treatment caught the attention of neighboring Philadelphia, where the *Gazette of the United States* declared “the uniformly liberal disposition manifested by the merchants of Baltimore, during the commercial embarrassment of that place, towards their brethren in distress, reflects everlasting honor upon the city.” The newspaper marveled that it is “rare to find a large body of men influenced by generous considerations, where individual interest, is immediately concerned; on the contrary, a scramble often takes place, each creditor hoping to secure himself the largest share.”⁴⁵

The “Association of Relief” provided only a temporary expedient. To meet the city’s need for greater access to credit and further stimulate the city’s economy, the Maryland legislature approved charters for seven new Baltimore banks between 1804 and 1812. The Union Bank of Maryland, the first of the new institutions, actually began operating prior to receiving its state charter. Like other Republican-dominated banks of the period, the Union Bank offered long-term paper that could be used as monetized credit, rather than the short-term business paper used by merchants. The introduction of this new medium of exchange helped satisfy a desperate need in Baltimore to

⁴⁵ *Baltimore Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, January 21, 1800; and *Gazette of the United States* quoted in the *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, February 3, 1800.

depersonalize “the relationship between debtor and creditor by giving the debtor[s] more freedom” to meet their obligations.⁴⁶

The expansion of local credit solved the short-term problem of immediate debts, but Baltimore still faced the prospect of recurring financial crises unless the city's dependence on the European markets could be broken. The hard times of the late 1790s highlighted the vulnerability of the post-colonial economy, and illustrated the need to supplement European trade in some fashion. Yet real change was slow to materialize. Rather than abandon the post-colonial system altogether, many Baltimore merchants favored further diversification of trade through the adoption of new commodities and the extension of existing overseas markets, especially those in the West Indies and South America.

Cotton provided a possible solution to Baltimore's trade problems. Mark Pringle, Robert Oliver, and several other Baltimore merchants recognized the potentially lucrative export market in cotton, but Alexander Brown proved the most adept at tapping this opportunity. A linen wholesaler who emigrated from Ballymena, Ireland during the late 1790s, Brown resumed his former trade upon arriving in Baltimore, announcing in the *Federal Gazette* a “most complete assortment of 4-4 and 7-8 Irish linen . . . which will be sold by the box or piece for cash or good acceptance within the city on usual credit.” After 1803, however, he abandoned the linen trade, making changes to both the commercial and financial aspects of his business. He began purchasing cotton from an

⁴⁶ Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation*, 22-23, 31-32. In addition to the Union Bank of Maryland, the Maryland legislature approved charters for The Mechanics Bank of Baltimore, The Marine Bank of Baltimore, The Franklin Bank of Baltimore, The Commercial & Farmers Bank of Baltimore, The Farmers & Merchants Bank of Baltimore, and The City Bank of Baltimore. See Kelly, Shank, and Gordon, *Money & Banking in Maryland*, II, 153, 172, 183, 198, 224.

agent in Savannah, Georgia for export to Liverpool, England, and quickly became Baltimore's most prosperous cotton merchant.⁴⁷

Brown's success was not wholly the result of the cotton trade. Unlike many eighteenth-century merchants who gambled on bold "adventures" that produced either enormous profits or dreadful losses, Brown represented a new generation of merchants who avoided speculation, and invested their capital in enterprises that promised minimal risk. Brown thus supplemented his cotton trade by acting as a brokerage house for English bills of exchange. He bought bills drawn on tobacco exporters in Petersburg, Virginia, and sold them to importers of English goods in Baltimore. As the British pound sterling remained the chief exchange currency in trans-Atlantic trade during the nineteenth century, the brokerage business in English bills produced a steady income. The new endeavors proved quite profitable, and by 1810, Brown had increased his firm's capital to \$121,000.⁴⁸

Both the financial and commercial aspects of Brown's business experienced unprecedented growth after 1810. In that year, William, Alexander's eldest son, removed from Baltimore to Liverpool to establish a overseas branch of the business. The new, although connected firm was called William and James Brown & Company. The new house quickly became one of the largest dealers of American cotton consignments in England, and with a branch in Liverpool, Alexander Brown & Sons was now able to draw English bills of exchange directly. The new branch transformed the firm from a

⁴⁷ Mark Pringle to Lubbock, Colt, and Co., February 14, 1797, Mark Pringle Letterbook, MS.680, MHS; Robert and John Oliver to Richard Forster, June 26, 1797, Oliver Record Books, volume 3, MHS; and *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, December 20, 1800.

⁴⁸ Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation*, 92, and Edwin Perkins, *Financing Anglo-American Trade: The House of Brown, 1800-1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 19-23.

mere American brokerage into a full-fledged trans-Atlantic exchange dealer. The Browns also began purchasing their own fleet of ships, beginning with the impressive 413-ton *Armata*, built in New York in 1810-1811. By 1820, the Browns' capital had risen to over one million dollars, making it one of the largest mercantile companies in America. By the 1830s, the financial services the Browns provided to merchants engaged in trans-Atlantic trade were rivaled only by the Second Bank of the United States.⁴⁹

Coffee represented another alternative for solving Baltimore's trade problems, but the commodity proved an elusive solution to Baltimore's trade problems. As coffee exports declined after 1800, only those merchants willing to risk significant capital profited from the trade. In 1802, it took Robert Oliver & Co. nine months to sell three barrels of coffee at the deflated price of 20 or 22 cents a pound. By winter, they finally decided to accept a loss of \$1,270 by selling the remaining cargo at auction.⁵⁰ Prices rebounded after the Peace of Amiens in 1803, but remained volatile as merchants continued to be wary of the constantly shifting diplomatic situation in the Atlantic. Larger firms like the Olivers relied on insurance claims to avoid losses due to seizures, but not every merchant was able to pay the spiraling rates. Others who paid their premiums sometimes failed to receive compensation because the insurer became

⁴⁹ Perkins, *Financing Anglo-American Trade*, 19-23. By the 1830s, the House of Brown's capital surpassed three million dollars, making it the largest mercantile company in the United States. Also see John Kouwenhoven, *Partners in Banking: An Historical Portrait of a Great Private Bank, Brown Brothers Harriman & Co., 1818-1968* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968); John Killick, "Risk, Specialization and Profit in the Mercantile Sector of the Nineteenth Century Cotton Trade: Alexander Brown & Sons, 1820-1880," *Business History*, 16 (1974): 1-16; and Gary Lawson Browne, "Business Innovation and Social Change: The Career of Alexander Brown after the War of 1812," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 69 (1974): 243-55.

⁵⁰ Bruchey, *Robert Oliver*, 235-60.

insolvent. Encumbered by high insurance costs, the threat of seizures, and an irregular supply of the bean itself, coffee imports represented only a minor part of Baltimore's commerce until the 1820s.⁵¹

The continuing diplomatic tug-of-war between Great Britain and France made further diversification in commodities and foreign markets a rather dismal prospect for solving Baltimore's economic frustrations. After the Peace of Amiens in 1803, Napoleon prohibited goods exported from any part of the British Empire to be imported to any port under French control. The decree required American merchants to obtain a certificate of origin from a French consul. The British reacted quickly. Under the so-called Rule of 1756, trade considered illegal during peacetime could not become legal during wartime if carried by a neutral nation. American merchants had circumvented the British restriction by conducting "broken voyages." Although the practice was of questionable legality, it received official sanction from the British Admiralty Court in the *Polly* decision of 1800. In the *Essex* case of 1805, however, the Lords of Appeal reversed the judgement on "broken voyages," opening the floodgates to British confiscations of American shipping. The Atlantic crisis steadily worsened over the next two years thanks to a series of British and French decrees that effectively eliminated the legality of neutral trade altogether. Seizures of American ships increased steadily. Even worse, the British refused to recognize American naturalization laws, and began impressing Americans. The most

⁵¹ Prior to 1812, coffee imports accounted for eleven percent of Baltimore's South American trade. After the South American Wars of Liberation in the 1820s, coffee became the principal part of Baltimore's trade with South America, and especially so with Brazil. See Frank Rutter, *South American Trade of Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1897), 11-15, 23-35.

celebrated episode of this cavalier practice was the *Chesapeake* incident.⁵²

On June 22, 1807, the U.S. Navy frigate *Chesapeake* left Hampton Roads, Virginia on its maiden voyage under the command of James Barron. Once off the Virginia Capes, H.M.S. *Leopard* confronted the *Chesapeake*, and the British captain bluntly demanded that a boarding party be allowed to search the U.S. warship for four alleged British deserters. Although the Royal Navy had impressed American citizens before, the demand to board a neutral nation's warship in international waters was neither a right nor a policy embraced by the British government. This remarkable incident therefore exceeded all precedent, and Captain Barron staunchly refused the British demand. The *Leopard* then fired three broadsides into the *Chesapeake*, crippling the U.S. vessel while killing three and wounding eighteen. A boarding party then searched the *Chesapeake* and removed four sailors—three of whom were indisputably Americans.⁵³

The outcry over *Chesapeake* incident precipitated the Jefferson administration to adopt the Embargo and Non-importation Acts of 1807. These laws effectively closed American commerce to the world, and over the next five years, the Jefferson and

⁵² James Zimmerman, *Impressment of American Seamen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 11-29, 116-55; Anna Caulder, *American Commerce As Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon* (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), 61, 66, 79-91; Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 76-80, 104-06; Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 31-102; and Smith, "Keeping the Republic," 248-49, 257-62.

⁵³ The order to board and search the *Chesapeake* came from Vice Admiral George Berkeley, the British commander of the North American station. Frustrated over deserters, especially in the Hampton Roads area, the Admiral yielded to his baser instincts, and gave the order on June 1, 1807. The British government recalled Berkeley after the incident, although the Admiral was later given another command. See Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1989), 17; Joseph Whitehouse, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814* (Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Co., 1997), 5-6; and Spencer Tucker and Frank Reuter, *Injured Honor: The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, June 22, 1807* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996).

Madison administrations continued to follow commercial policies designed to cripple British trade. Their efforts failed to win political concessions from the Parliament and instead debilitated American commerce. U.S. exports plummeted from \$108 million in 1807 to just \$22 million in 1808, their lowest level in sixteen years. Imports dropped from \$139 million to \$57 million, their lowest level in fourteen years.⁵⁴ The frustrations of the embargo period convinced the most steadfast merchants that further diversification in overseas markets would not solve the republic's problems. Even Robert Oliver substantially withdrew from business after 1809, unwilling to negotiate the multiple barriers created by the countless laws and varied economic frustrations imposed against American commerce during these years. For the second time after the Revolution, the neomercantilist economy had brought hardship and disappointment to the republic, and the most stubborn proponents of overseas trade realized that Americans could no longer rely exclusively on foreign trade as their sole source of prosperity.

⁵⁴ For the Jefferson administration's reaction to the Chesapeake incident see Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis*, 68-71, 103-229; Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 239-42; Tucker and Reuter, *Injured Honor*, 189-206; and Smith, "Keeping the Republic," 261-76. For the decline in American trade after the embargo, see *Historical Statistics of the United States*, II, 886.

PART TWO
BALTIMORE AND THE MARKET REVOLUTION

CHAPTER SIX INTO THE BACKCOUNTRY

As early as November 1799, when the economic repercussions of the Panic of 1797 were still unfolding, an editorial in the *Baltimore American* urged the business community to move away from overseas trade and adopt a new direction for Baltimore's economy. The paper urged "every friend to the Republican interest . . . to encourage out home manufactures as much as possible, and to consume as little as he can of the British. By purchasing their goods we increase the revenue of that country, and thereby aid the foes of liberty." The clarion was also raised by other newspapers. The Federalist editors of the *Baltimore Federal Gazette* embraced the idea of economic independence by expansion of the domestic market in August 1800, when they too urged the business community to redirect Baltimore's economy away from the Atlantic economy and towards the opportunities in the American West.¹

Calls for domestic market development, improvements in American manufacturing, and more economic independence were not uncommon in the crisis preceding the American Revolution, nor in the years following the war. Yet advocates of this approach had previously been drowned out by the supporters of the neomercantilist approach. With the clouds of economic despair still looming above the city, however, the clarion had finally found receptive ears. In the twenty years after the hard times of the 1790s, the city's merchants and artisans, through both public and private means, worked

¹ *Baltimore American*, November 4, 1799, and *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, August 18, 1800.

to expand Baltimore's market connections to the backcountry. The development of a return trade and the overall growth of the backcountry trade after 1800 represented a major moment of transition for the American economy, from the Atlantic-oriented, commerce-driven, neomercantilist economy of the late eighteenth century to a western-oriented, vastly expanded domestic market economy in the early nineteenth century. In 1800, the idea of a national market, or even an integrated regional one, was still just a vision. Yet over the next two decades, that vision slowly began to take shape with profound consequences for both the household economy and the prevailing social order.

In contrast to earlier, isolated examples of individual entrepreneurship, the renewed interest in the backcountry encouraged a broad range of merchants and artisans to expand their commercial ties with the countryside. The question that remained unresolved was which backcountry would prove most enticing to Baltimore's merchants and artisans. Competition promised to be especially fierce in the mid-Atlantic. Merchants and artisans in Philadelphia and New York to the north, and Alexandria and the new Federal City to the south, vied with those in Baltimore for a share of the return trade to the backcountry.

The booming populations of Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina did not go unnoticed by coastal merchants like John Peter Spies. The owner of a comb manufactory in Baltimore, an importer of goods from Bremen, Bordeaux, and Havana, and a reseller of Maryland tobacco, Spies embodied the city's entrepreneurial spirit. He looked primarily to markets in the upper South to sell his wares, dealing directly with customers in urban areas of Virginia. Yet most of his transactions involved customers living hundreds of miles away in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. For these

customers, especially those in rural areas, Spies operated in much the same way that merchants conducted overseas trade, by relying on business partners who served as agents and by selling goods on short-term credit. The approach had shortcomings, however, for merchants and artisans looking to expand their backcountry connections. Building a reliable network of business associates took time, and often proved a risky way of doing business. Bad debts could accumulate very quickly, and as early as 1806, Spies counted more than 150 people as “doubtful debtors” who owed him nearly \$14,000. By 1818, this number had swelled to almost 200 people, and exceeded \$23,500.² Spies proved adept at avoiding the pitfalls of the trade, and became a leading figure in Baltimore’s commercial ties to the South. For most Baltimore merchants and artisans, however, markets in the upper South remained largely out-of-reach. Profits could be enormous, but unless someone had a knowledge of the territory and type of credible business connections that Spies possessed, the trade was simply too risky.

The Ohio River Valley, which included parts of western Pennsylvania and western Virginia, as well as the new states of Kentucky and Ohio, represented the ultimate prize for many coastal merchants and artisans. Numbering no more than 100,000 rough-and-ready settlers at the end of the Revolution, the region’s population likely exceeded 400,000 by the turn of the century. More important, this growth continued at an even faster pace over the next twenty years. In 1810, Kentucky’s population alone surpassed 400,000. By 1820, Kentucky and Ohio each accounted nearly 600,000 people, and settlements had spread into Indiana and Illinois. The population of the entire Ohio Valley likely surpassed 2 million, which meant that one in five Americans

² [John Peter] Spies Ledger, MS.785, MHS.

lived there.³ Despite its enormous potential, the area suffered from the same drawbacks as markets in the upper South. Few could safely take advantage of the trade until significant transportation and banking connections were forged later in the nineteenth century. The value of trade with the Ohio Valley between 1800 and 1820 should not be underestimated or dismissed, but most of the commerce remained in the hands of a relatively small elite. Discovering dependable business connections required time, and most Baltimoreans faced an immediate need to supplement their traditional mercantile pursuits.

Building connections to the Ohio River Valley and the markets of the upper South represented long-term goals, and at the turn of the nineteenth century, most merchants and artisans needed a short-term solution to their economic woes. The lower Potomac River Valley to the south represented the closest area for expansion, but it held limited potential. The region encompassed five Maryland counties, including St. Marys, Charles, Calvert, Prince George's, and Montgomery, as well as most of northern Virginia extending westward to the Shenandoah Valley. This area held potential political advantages for Baltimoreans, as most of the region, including the Potomac River itself, laid within Maryland's borders. Competition from Alexandria and Washington also promised to be weaker than Baltimore's northern neighbors would likely provide. Unfortunately, population growth stagnated after the Revolution, and Baltimore's merchants had already assumed much of the area's tobacco and wheat trade in the 1780s

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), I, 26-29, 32-36.

and 1790s.⁴

Unlike the struggling Maryland counties to the south, the farms and towns of western Pennsylvania to the north were ideally suited for immediate market expansion. Western Pennsylvania experienced a surge in population growth and wealth in the two decades after the American Revolution, providing a burgeoning market for dry goods and luxury items. Baltimore had served as an entrepot for farmers in the Susquehanna Valley, so many merchants already possessed business connections that could be developed further. Although a few merchants like Spies grew wealthy thanks to trade with the south or the west, the majority of the city's residents looked to the north to forge market connections in the twenty years after the Panic of 1797.

The expansion of competition in the backcountry was accomplished largely through the introduction or expansion of three capitalist devices. First, artisans and merchants in coastal cities launched intensive marketing campaigns in backcountry newspapers. The advertising dollars spent by Baltimoreans actually represented the largest source of revenue for many Pennsylvania newspapers. Second, merchants and bankers created favorable credit terms and exchange rates for backcountry residents as an inducement to secure their trade. Third, artisans and merchants poured thousands of dollars into the construction of turnpikes to maintain market connections to backcountry farmers and shopkeepers. Baltimore's reach into the backcountry was greatly extended, but most of these efforts were designed to integrate existing markets into rather than create new ones. In other words, Baltimoreans took advantage of their existing connections with western Pennsylvanians to augment the city's share of commerce within

⁴ See the discussion in chapter three.

the mid-Atlantic and develop new avenues of commerce.

OVERLAPPING HINTERLANDS

Since the late seventeenth century, Pennsylvania's backcountry had been contested ground between Marylanders and Philadelphians. Not surprisingly, the contest for this hinterland continued into the nineteenth century when expansion of the return trade to the backcountry became a renewed priority for merchants and artisans in both cities. Ethnicity and religious affiliation proved important in this competition only at the individual level. Scots-Irish retailers favored doing business with Scots-Irish wholesalers, German farmers preferred buying goods from German importers, Catholic settlers tended to buy from Catholic merchants, and Quaker shopkeepers were more likely to trust their fellow Quakers. Yet neither the Philadelphia nor the Baltimore business community enjoyed an aggregate commercial advantage in the backcountry for ethnic reasons. Although the ethnic make-up of Baltimore differed in many important ways from that of Philadelphia, the diversity of ethnic settlements in the Pennsylvania backcountry tended to neutralize any potential advantages to either city on this basis.

Scots-Irish and German sectarians represented the majority of the population in western Pennsylvania, and both Philadelphia and Baltimore contained a significant number of both ethnic groups. Baltimore merchants built on commercial ties they had previously forged with German settlers in Frederick County, Maryland, while Philadelphia merchants cultivated their long-standing connections to farmers and shopkeepers in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Merchants from both ports contended for the German trade in York County by advertising in the *York Gazette*, the town's

primary German-language newspaper, but neither Baltimore nor Philadelphia merchants had a clear advantage in this ethnically diverse county.⁵

Philadelphia had a larger Quaker population than Baltimore, but most western Pennsylvania Quakers had their regional meeting in Baltimore, not Philadelphia.⁶ Baltimore had a greater Catholic population than Philadelphia, but there were rather few Catholics in western Pennsylvania. In a letter to the Bishop John Carroll in 1800, Dmitri Gallitzin, a Russian-born missionary, claimed that “the country is amazing fertile, most entirely inhabited by Roman Catholicks, and so advantageously situated with regard to market that . . . it will be a place of refuge.” Although a ringing endorsement of western Pennsylvania’s prospects, Gallitzin’s claims were enormously exaggerated. Catholics were a small minority in western Pennsylvania in the early nineteenth century, and many found the Susquehanna Valley particularly inhospitable. Upon his arrival in Northumberland County in May 1796, Father Patrick Lonergan, an Irish missionary, held out great promise for the construction of a chapel. He wrote of having “high hopes from the respectable people of different religious opinions” that the project would succeed. By January 1797, however, Lonergan was petitioning Bishop Carroll for relief. The beleaguered priest felt besieged by his neighbors, lashing out at them as “a reprobated clan of infamous Scots-Irish, superior in all kind of wickedness only in a superlative degree to the most celebrated, hostile convicts.” Although Patrick Campbell of

⁵ *York Gazette*, September 30, 1796, October 14, 1796, and October 21, 1796.

⁶ After 1790, the Philadelphia yearly meeting included Pennsylvanians living east of the Susquehanna River, as well as the residents of Delaware and Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Baltimore’s meeting included Pennsylvanians living west of the Susquehanna River, as well as residents of Maryland’s Western Shore, and Fairfax County, Virginia. See Phebe Jacobson, *Quaker Records in Maryland* (Annapolis: Hall of Records, 1966).

Chambersburg did not display the same level of hostility, he was still pessimistic about the prospects of the Catholic Church in his town. Writing on behalf of the church trustees to Bishop Carroll in 1804, Campbell lamented that “we have many [congregates] but they are of the Poorer sort and constantly in the way of Emigrating.”⁷ Any potential advantage Baltimore may have possessed thanks to Bishop Carroll’s location soon ended as well. After 1808, Philadelphia became a separate diocese, ending the Baltimore diocese’s jurisdiction in Pennsylvania. Baltimoreans and Philadelphians thus found it difficult to cashier their religious affiliations into any significant commercial advantages.

Geography, rather than religion or ethnicity, shaped the contest for the return trade to Pennsylvania’s backcountry. Few Baltimore merchants attempted to compete for a share of the market east of the Susquehanna River. The high costs and risks associated with the intense marketing and turnpike construction that was required to win the return trade from Pennsylvania convinced Baltimore investors to carefully target their dollars. Philadelphia’s geographic advantages and long-standing ties to the eastern Susquehanna Valley thus persuaded the majority of Baltimore’s merchants and artisans to forgo any direct challenges to the Quaker city’s hegemony over the area. There were, of course, a number of exceptions. John Close, a merchant-shopkeeper in Mechanicsburg and Harrisburg, traded with more than a dozen Baltimore merchants between 1800 and 1818. Close purchased sugar, tea, rum, and wine in Baltimore, as well as many dry goods that were available in Philadelphia. His receipt of July 25, 1812 revealed a purchase of oil cloths, silk stockings, ribbons, waistcoats, and silk caps totaling \$122.95 from A.

⁷ Father Dmitri Gallitzin to Bishop John Carroll, February 9, 1800, folder 8A-N2; Father Patrick Lonergan to Bishop John Carroll, May 5, 1796, folder 5A7, and January 24, 1797, folder 5A9; and Father Patrick Campbell to Bishop John Carroll, March 16, 1804, folder 2F7, all in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Karthus of Baltimore, and a later receipt of July 2, 1818 showed a \$175.49 purchase for “casimere, silk,” and other textiles from the Baltimore firm Meredith and Mummer. Close proved exceptional, however, as most Baltimore merchants and artisans largely ignored the eastern Susquehanna Valley. The experience of John Forrester was more typical of residents in Dauphin County. Between 1807 and 1809, he purchased coffee, brandy, molasses, sugar, chocolate, and snuff exclusively from Philadelphia merchants and shopkeepers. All these commodities, and especially snuff, were readily available in Baltimore.⁸

The experience of George Youse, a whiskey distiller in Dauphin County, provides a clear example of how Baltimoreans refused to cultivate any significant commercial connections east of the Susquehanna even when one of the region’s more entrepreneurial residents gave them every opportunity to win his commerce. In 1809, Youse built a brick stillhouse and purchased 200 bushels of corn and rye valued at over £70. He began distilling whiskey shortly thereafter, and on December 22, he paid George Garman £1.13.0 to transport his first consignment to Baltimore. Initially, Youse divided his consignments between Baltimore and Philadelphia, demonstrating his desire to find the most profitable market. The first consignment was small, amounting to only two barrels, or 66 gallons. On December 26, Youse sent his next consignment of 227 gallons to Philadelphia, and then sent a third consignment of 348¼ gallons to Baltimore. On January 13, 1810, he paid Abraham Facklen £12.14.7½ for hauling 509¼ gallons of whiskey to both Baltimore and Philadelphia, but made no accounting for what percentage

⁸ John Close Account Book, Business Records Collection, MG.2, II, B, Pennsylvania State Archives, and Forester Family Papers, MG.153, folder 4, Dauphin County Historical Society.

went to each city.⁹ Baltimore's whiskey merchants clearly had the chance to secure Youse's trade, but within a month of the sale of his fourth consignment, the backcountry distiller decided that Philadelphia would be his primary market. From late January through August 1810, Youse sent only one of his 28 consignments to Baltimore. He shipped 21 whiskey consignments to Philadelphia, amounting to 5,177 gallons, and entered six transactions for local sales, amounting to 6 barrels, or approximately 200 gallons. Philadelphia thus accounted for 85 percent of the trade, while Baltimore's share fell short of 15 percent. What happened?

Freightage costs can not account for Youse ultimately favoring the Philadelphia market. He paid roughly a £1 per 40 gallons of whiskey for hauling to either port. Merchants in both cities offered competitive prices for whiskey, so Youse did not base his decision on the potential for profits. His accounts do not reveal to whom he sold his whiskey, but his decided prejudice for the Philadelphia market suggests that Philadelphia's merchants cultivated better business relationships with him than did merchants in Baltimore. Despite Youse's proven ability to succeed as a whiskey distiller, his location in the eastern Susquehanna Valley made him an untiring commercial prospect to Baltimoreans. The city's merchants and shopkeepers likely believed that while producers like Youse demonstrated a willingness to trade in the short-term, heroic efforts would have been needed to keep them from eventually gravitating to the Philadelphia market in the long-term. The records fall silent on the precise answer to this question, but the behavior of the Baltimore firm Timanus and Company, which specialized in the backcountry flour and whiskey trades exemplified the attitude. Over a

⁹ George Youse Papers, MG.240, Dauphin County Historical Society.

three-year period, the company purchased flour valued at \$145,202, and whiskey worth almost \$75,000. Their success was due in part to their extraordinary number of backcountry connections, including several with Pennsylvanians living west of the Susquehanna. David Moreland, a farmer in York County, accounted for 10 transactions over two years worth \$1,402. He also purchased fish worth \$608 and “sundries” worth \$2,481 over the same two-year period. Cumberland County’s James Rodgers sent one shipment of flour worth \$57, as well as 6 shipments of whiskey worth \$918. Yet Timanus and Company never bought a single consignment of whiskey from any Pennsylvanian living east of the Susquehanna—a pattern of commercial behavior repeated by most Baltimore merchants and artisans.¹⁰

THE MARKETING REVOLUTION

The first step in winning the backcountry trade in western Pennsylvania was to blanket local newspapers with advertisements. Baltimoreans hoped that these ads would help entice some of the return trade away from Philadelphia merchants and artisans. Once a stable market emerged in a particular county, more extensive investments could be made, including turnpike and canal construction. The strategy demonstrated a very modern, capitalist sensibility. According to modern microeconomic theory, when “the relative advantages of a particular good or brand are not very great,” as was the case with Philadelphia’s transportation connections to settlers west of the Susquehanna River, “advertising may play a very important role” in shaping consumer preferences.¹¹ In the

¹⁰ Timanus and Company Ledger, MS.830, MHS.

¹¹ Edwin Mansfield, *Microeconomics: Theory / Applications*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 78.

absence of any significant price differences or differences in non-market factors, including personal attention given to customers and the accessibility of markets, the visibility of the producer often proves the deciding reason in consumer decisions. Direct advertising in backcountry newspapers thus provided Baltimoreans with a needed advantage in capturing western Pennsylvania's retail trade.

Much of the literature on the market revolution has ignored newspapers as instruments of social and economic change, because historians of early American newspapers have largely ignored the study of advertisements. Historian Michael Schudson dismissed advertisements as mere window dressing, "like the cover of a book or magazine—one turned to the inside to find the content of the paper." In his recent study of the "character and content" of colonial newspapers, David Copeland also excluded advertisements altogether as a subject of interest.¹² The standard interpretation of early American newspapers holds that until the advent of the "penny press" in the 1830s, newspapers were primarily vehicles for political partisanship. There is no doubt that the disputes between Federalists and Republicans shaped the development of early American newspapers, and Baltimore's press proved little different in this regard. The polemics launched by Baltimore's arch-Federalist Alexander Hanson against his Republican foil William Pechin may not have reached the acrimonious pitch that Fenno and Freneau displayed in the Philadelphia press, but the political barbs exchanged in the

¹² Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 14, and David Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997). Also see Willard Beyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927); Alfred McClurg Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1937); Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); and Carol Sue Humphrey, *The Press of the Young Republic, 1783-1833* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

Baltimore press did not lack intensity. Nevertheless, an exclusive focus on the political content of early nineteenth-century newspapers obscures the broader truth that editors designed newspapers primarily as tools of mercantile development.¹³

Early nineteenth-century advertisements were unsophisticated by modern standards, lacking the glitz and panache of a Madison Avenue campaign. Few provided illustrations of any kind, and none of them offered catchy jingles, memorable phrases, or colorful metaphors. Advertisements in the first dailies did not address many of the basic elements of consumer decision-making upon which ad agencies focused after 1900, including need recognition, alternative evaluation, and how to deal with post-purchase consumer anxiety.¹⁴ Instead, the earliest ads presented basic commercial information in a concise and somewhat ordinary manner, falling well short of a “general saturation” of “product images or the wholesale transfiguration of products into psychological props” that theorists of mass culture claim modern marketing achieved.¹⁵ Yet to expect

¹³ Several studies do recognize the importance of newspapers as tools of early mercantile development, and are worthy of note. See especially Ronald Hoffman, “The Press in Mercantile Maryland: A Question of Utility,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 46 (1969): 536-44; Allan Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 20-77; Alvin Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins of Grammar, and the Future of Ideology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 91-124; Roxanne Zimmer, “The Urban Daily Press: Baltimore, 1797-1816” (Ph.D., University of Iowa, 1982); Richard L. Bushman, “Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America,” in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994); and David Rawson, “‘Guardians of Their Own Liberty’: A Contextual History of Print Culture in Virginia Society, 1750 to 1820” (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1998), 333-430.

¹⁴ For a microeconomic perspective on the development of advertising, see Monle Lee and Carla Johnson, *Principles of Advertising: A Global Perspective* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), 85-93, 117-21.

¹⁵ John Styles, “Manufacturing, consumption, and design in eighteenth-century England,” in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 540-42. The literature on mass culture theory is vast. See especially Mary Douglas and Barron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Toward an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: Basic Books, 1979); Richard Wightman Fox and T. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of*

twentieth-century marketing outcomes for early nineteenth-century newspapers hauls contemporary social theory through the unfamiliar terrain of the early republic. In his study of the evolution of advertising, Julian Simon demonstrated “a strong relationship between the extent of advertising in an economy and the level of development of the economy.”¹⁶ An advertiser’s objectives in a backcountry weekly or urban daily in 1800 were different from those of a modern mass media campaign, thus early American newspapers must be analyzed within the context of the early nineteenth century, when the regional market economy was in its infancy. The rather modest scope of the advertisements, relative to twentieth-century standards, should be expected given the extent of market development in the early republic. The purpose was not product-identification within a mature capitalist system, but the extension or creation of markets in a nascent market economy.

Although backcountry weeklies and urban dailies served distinct purposes, advertisements in both types of papers functioned as agents of social and economic change. Daily newspapers acted primarily as producer tools of mercantile elites rather than a consumer good for mass society or a political vehicle for partisan rhetoric. One-half to three-quarters of a daily newspaper’s total column inches consisted of advertisements and other commercial information. The primary audience for these advertisements, and by extension the newspaper, was the urban mercantile community.

Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Robert Root, *The Rhetoric of Popular Culture: Advertising, Advocacy, and Entertainment* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); and Richard Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

¹⁶ Julian L. Simon, *Issues in the Economics of Advertising* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 167.

At six to nine dollars per year for a subscription, a daily newspaper may have been unaffordable for most of Baltimore's skilled laborers. For the city's merchants and artisans, however, access to reliable, current commercial information often proved the difference between success and failure. Editors thus presented often fragmentary commercial details, realizing that their intended audience possessed enough knowledge about the market to interpret and use the abstracted information.¹⁷

The weekly newspaper served a different function, and Baltimoreans were at the forefront of expanding their commercial use during the early nineteenth century. By advertising extensively in the backcountry press, Baltimoreans turned many of Pennsylvania's weekly newspapers into marketing tools designed to effect consumer behavior. Instead of becoming a producer tool of the mercantile elite, like the urban daily, the backcountry weekly became an instrument of market development itself. Ultimately, Baltimoreans who advertised directly in the backcountry press hoped to transform their city from an entrepot into the principal city of a regional market.

Effective marketing in backcountry newspapers faced several problems. Unlike the generalized commercial information that editors often included in Baltimore's daily newspapers, advertisements represented the only way Baltimoreans could present commercial information in the backcountry press. The prospective audience for a backcountry paper presented another difficulty. Although many Baltimore dailies boasted a readership that extended throughout Maryland, the majority of their subscribers consisted of reasonably affluent white Baltimore men who worked as either merchants or artisans in the city. Editors could therefore cater to a specific group of people who were

¹⁷ Zimmer, "The Urban Daily Press," 3, 26. Also see Pred, *Urban Growth*, 20-77; and Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*, 91-124.

known to them. Together, editors and readers formed a “public sphere” in which all participants understood the context of the information provided within a daily newspaper. In the case of the backcountry weeklies, advertisers needed to create an altogether new “public sphere” that invited the participation of backcountry farmers, shopkeepers, and merchants.

The use of the term “public sphere” as it specifically relates to advertising is based on the work of Jürgen Habermas, who warned that “to the extent that the press became commercialized, the threshold between the circulation of a commodity and the exchange of communications among the members of the public was leveled.” In other words, the moment when an editor or publisher began producing a newspaper itself as a commodity, where the primary intent was to sell as many newspapers as possible regardless of its content, the newspaper ceased to be a functional instrument of the public sphere. Baltimore advertisers used backcountry newspapers for commercial reasons, but the newspapers themselves were only used as tools for communicating commercial information. The weeklies were not commodities for a mass market like the later “penny press,” and thus pass Habermas’s test of whether or not “the publishers procured for the press a commercial basis without, however, commercializing it as such.” Habermas continued that “a press that had evolved out of the public’s use of its reason and that had merely been an extension of its debate remained thoroughly an institution of this very public.” Even if the ‘debate’ was itself commercial in nature, the newspaper remained “effective in the mode of a transmitter and amplifier, no longer a mere vehicle for the transportation of information but not yet a medium for culture as an object of consumption.” When Baltimoreans advertised in Pennsylvania weeklies, they created a

public sphere “that in general characterized a private people functioning as a public.”¹⁸

The conventional style of the advertisements allowed Baltimoreans to include backcountry readers in a new and extended “public sphere.” When Samuel Frey, a grocer, placed an ad in *The York Recorder* announcing the movement of his store’s location in Baltimore, he directed the announcement to “the Borough and County of York,” presenting the information as if he were simply letting his neighbors know what he was doing. Frey continued “that he means to move his store from his Ware house, on Cheapside Wharf, to a house near the corner of Market and Howard Streets.”¹⁹ No further directions are provided. If Frey had emphasized the distance between his store and York, he would have erased the illusion of familiarity created in the presentation. The advertisement thus succeeded in inventing a new “public sphere” by including both Samuel Frey and the residents of York County as members of the same community—albeit a largely imagined community stretched over several hundred square miles.

York County emerged as a natural area of interest for the Baltimore business community’s advertisements. Merchants from both Philadelphia and Baltimore placed ads in English-language York newspapers in the 1790s, but the pattern of the marketing campaigns shifted after 1800. Between 1789 and 1799, only three Baltimore firms and three Philadelphia firms advertised in the *Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser*. Samuel Smith offered “fine and coarse salt . . . near head of Market Street

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “From the Journalism of Private Men of Letters to the Public Consumer Services of the Mass Media: The Public Sphere as a Platform for Advertising,” in Thomas Burger, trans., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1991; orig. 1962), 181-96. It is interesting to note that when the “penny press” finally commodified newspapers in the 1830s, all sense of a public sphere was indeed lost. See Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 3-150.

¹⁹ *The York Recorder*, April 2, 1800.

[Baltimore] . . . lower than it is sold at any other store.” A Baltimore dentist promoted his services on Gay Street, and George Eichelberger proclaimed the opening of his tobacco manufactory on Water Street.²⁰ None of these early Baltimore advertisements catered to the dry goods trade. In contrast, Philadelphia merchants offered brass, ironmongery, cutlery, German goods, and books. The content of the advertisements demonstrated that York County residents continued to sell their commodities in Baltimore and buy dry goods in Philadelphia prior to 1800.²¹

For the eight years after 1800 in which there is a complete run of *The York Recorder*, thirteen Baltimore firms and only three Philadelphia firms appeared. The relatively small number of firms concealed a sharp increase in the volume of advertisements placed by Baltimore’s business community. In 1800, direct Baltimore advertisements in *The York Recorder* amounted to only 6 percent of the total number of advertisements in the newspaper. Combining the direct advertisements placed by both Philadelphia and Baltimore merchants, the seaports accounted for only 15 percent of the total advertisements. By 1804, however, the beginning of the Baltimore marketing blitz was apparent. The city’s share of advertisements in *The York Recorder* reached 21 percent, or an increase of nearly fourfold in just four years. Advertisements by Baltimore firms also appeared in nearly every issue establishing a continuous economic presence for the city’s business community in York County.

Unlike their advertisements of the 1790s, Baltimoreans focused on the dry goods

²⁰ *Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser*, December 14, 1791, September 18, 1793, and June 13, 1798.

²¹ *Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser*, November 20, 1792, December 4, 1793, and July 19, 1797.

trade with several artisans contributing. The Baltimore company of Schaeffer and Miller announced that they had “erected a Chocolate Manufactory, at No. 76 Cumberland Row,” and the booksellers Magill and Cline advertised new stationery available at No. 224 Market Street. Michael Lee, a Baltimore druggist, advertised medicines for sale. Other Baltimore advertisements offered German and London blistered steel, iron rods, “Russian bristles,” “plaister of Paris,” grindstones for weaver’s shops, and groceries. More traditional commodities also received advertising space, including sugar, coffee, Spanish hides, wine, “Jamaica Pimento,” “Canada Musk-rat skins,” salt, and fish. In Cumberland County, Baltimore firms ignored *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* through 1797. This changed in 1798 when James Fletcher of Baltimore advertised a variety of commodities. Thereafter, Baltimore merchants and artisans heavily patronized the *Carlisle Gazette*.²²

That Baltimore’s merchants and artisans would patronize major backcountry newspapers like *The York Recorder* or the *Carlisle Gazette* may not be surprising. The extensiveness of Baltimore’s marketing campaign is demonstrated by the city’s patronage of many minor backcountry newspapers as well. In Gettysburg, direct advertisements by Baltimore merchants began appearing in *The Adams Centinel* after 1805. In Chambersburg the *Democratic Republican and Pennsylvania Advertiser* claimed an even smaller readership than *The Adams Centinel*, but the modest scope of the newspaper heightened the visibility of each advertiser. In a three-year period from 1815 to 1817,

²² *The York Recorder*, January 29, 1800, September 30, 1801, June 16, 1802, June 6, 1804, June 13, 1804, April 14, 1810, April 21, 1810, August 4, 1810, November 3, 1810, May 4, 1811, and November 9, 1811. By comparison, Philadelphians advertised a mill-stone manufactory, books, and drugs. See *The York Recorder*, September 17, 1800, June 23, 1802, and May 4, 1803. For Carlisle, see Judith Ridner, “‘A Handsomely Improved Place’: Economic, Social, and Gender-Role Development in a Backcountry Town, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1750-1810” (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 1994), 296-303.

only five Baltimore firms advertised in the *Democratic Republican*, but they accounted for almost one-third of the total advertising in the newspaper (a higher percentage than in *The York Recorder*.) As with the larger backcountry papers, the Baltimore firms offered an assortment of dry goods, including “Spanish hides,” calf skins, slaughter hides, tanner’s oil, sole, pump, rigging and skirting leathers, saddles, cutlery, brasswares, hardware, buttons, fine teas, wines, and groceries. James Lee advertised his “Western Hotel” on Howard Street in Baltimore, and three Chambersburg shopkeepers advertised goods imported from Baltimore.²³

Among the six Chambersburg shopkeepers who made no direct reference to Baltimore in their advertisements, two very likely received their merchandise from the Maryland port. P. Muthwell and Company, Confectioners, on Front Street, Chambersburg, advertised a combination of sugar, molasses, shad, herring, and especially “West Indies fruit.” Accounting for Baltimore’s active trade in fish with backcountry merchants, and the port’s extensive ties to South America, this eclectic list of commodities strongly suggests a Maryland connection. Josh Hershberger, the other Chambersburg shopkeeper, appeared prominently in the Timanus and Company ledger. Although he recorded no sales in flour or whiskey, Hershberger purchased over \$300 worth of fish, \$74 worth of salt, and \$1,771 in sundry merchandise from the Baltimore firm between 1817 and 1819.²⁴

Although western Pennsylvanians did not forsake the Philadelphia market as a

²³ *Democratic-Republican and Pennsylvania Advertiser* (Chambersburg), November 7, 1815, July 22, 1816, and May 12, 1817. The Baltimore goods imported by Chambersburg shopkeepers included groceries, hardware, Queensware, liquors, shad, herring, coffee, and sugar.

²⁴ *Democratic Republican and Pennsylvania Advertiser* (Chambersburg), June 17, 1816, and Timanus and Company Ledger, MHS.

source of dry goods, the use of backcountry newspapers as marketing tools had effected consumer behavior in the region. According to historian Judith Ridner, many people “turned more frequently to Baltimore as the new center of economic dynamism in the mid-Atlantic.” At James West’s Baltimore store in 1800, for example, both small Carlisle retailers like George Cart, and major Carlisle merchants like John Hughes, William Drevish, and William Moore began purchasing dry goods. Cart bought £97.18.7 worth of “fine blue cloth, white cassimere, flannel, coating, handkerchiefs, pins, button molds, buttons, and rose blankets” from West. Hughes and Drevish became minor patrons, but Moore bought extensively. A few Baltimore firms had even established brand recognition for their products. Thomas Paul, a Baltimore chemist and druggist, faced a growing problem with products that claimed either to be his medicinal oil or to perform like it. He issued a warning to the York County public “not to purchase any oil that may not be offered as Paul’s Patent Columbian Oil, that does not bear the true characteristic.” Only the Patent Columbian Oil sold by Doctor John Love of Baltimore was authentic.²⁵

Baltimore firms benefited immensely from the expanded backcountry trade. Between May 1816 and October 1819, Shippensburg’s Christopher Owe consigned 37 shipments of whiskey totaling \$7,361.33, and two shipments of flour worth \$344.37 to the Baltimore firm of Timanus and Company. Owe also made six purchases of fish worth \$264, and on two occasions took loans amounting to \$900 from Timanus and Company. Although the ledger did not reveal if Owe patronized Philadelphia firms too, the size and regularity of his trade with Timanus and Company suggested an exclusive

²⁵ Ridner, “‘A Handsomely Improved Place’,” 300-03, and *The York Recorder*, January 29, 1800, April 2, 1800, September 30, 1801, June 16, 1802.

connection with Baltimore. For three years, and with little variation, Owe sent a monthly shipment of whiskey to the Maryland city worth an average \$198.95. Three other Shippensburg residents, including Adam Snoddy, William Richard, and Stephen Culbertson, patronized Timanus fourteen times for coffee, salt, and sundries coming to almost \$1,300. The trade from the western Susquehanna Valley to Baltimore included more than just wheat flour and whiskey after 1800. William Adams, a York shopkeeper, made 59 transactions for bar iron with Baltimore agent Joseph Arthur between 1807 and 1809.²⁶

Unlike Baltimore's commercial expansion into the lower Potomac River Valley in the 1780s, which stunted economic development in the region, the growth of the backcountry trade did not undermine economic development in western Pennsylvania. There were three reasons for this. First, Pennsylvanians benefited from the presence of two major seaports competing for their trade. In the Potomac Valley, merchants and artisans in Alexandria, Georgetown, and the fledgling District of Columbia failed to make significant market connections throughout the region despite family and religious ties to farmers and shopkeepers in southern Maryland. As a result, southern Maryland became a backwater hinterland of one seaport, Baltimore. Second, western Pennsylvanians were dedicated to splitting their retail trade between the Philadelphia and Baltimore after 1800. York shopkeepers did not announce the arrival of goods from either port with any regularity, and York County remained a divided hinterland through the Civil War. Residents in Carlisle also divided the sale of their agricultural produce between Philadelphia and Baltimore after 1800. According to Ridner, Carlisle's "residents paid

²⁶ Timanus and Company Ledger, MHS, and William Adams General Store Account Book, BR-7. Historical Society of York County.

greater attention to boosting the town's ability to serve as a viable and economically diverse service center for the county and region," which helped the town avoid becoming an economic satellite of either eastern seaport.²⁷

The western Susquehanna Valley also possessed a more diverse social structure in 1800 than much of the lower Potomac Valley. In St. Marys County, Maryland, the percentage of households primarily engaged in agriculture exceeded 85 percent in 1800. The paucity of local businesses allowed Baltimoreans to dominate the county's retail and commodity trades. Increasingly, the county's planters relied on Baltimore for almost all their manufactures. In western Pennsylvania, however, 30 to 50 percent of the rural inhabitants were already non-farmers as early as 1800. In towns like Carlisle, over 90 percent of the population worked in non-agricultural occupations. This diversity, coupled with the inhabitants' active desire to balance local development with regional interaction, helped western Pennsylvanians avoid complete dependence on the seaports while integrating their economy into the regional market.²⁸

²⁷ Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place'," 274. Also see Bayly Ellen Marks, "Rural Response to Urban Penetration: Baltimore and St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1790-1840," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 8 (1982): 113-14; Jo N. Hays, "Overlapping Hinterlands: York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, 1800-1850," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 116 (1992): 295-321; Paul Doutrich, "The Evolution of an American Town: Yorktown, Pennsylvania, 1740-1790" (Ph.D., University of Kentucky, 1985), 115, 146-161; Jane Garrett, "Philadelphia and Baltimore, 1790-1840: A study of Intra-Regional Unity," *Maryland Historical Society*, 55 (1960): 1-13; and Gregory Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 46 (1989): 641-70.

²⁸ Marks, "Rural Response to Urban Penetration," 118; Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place'," 159-65, 191-93, 226; and Lee Soltow and Kenneth Keller, "Rural Pennsylvania in 1800: A Portrait from the Septennial Census," *Pennsylvania History*, 49 (1982): 25-39.

BANKS AND CREDIT

Just as important as the marketing campaign in backcountry newspapers were the liberal credit arrangements and reduced discounts on backcountry bank notes that Baltimore merchants and artisans offered to western Pennsylvanians. It was not uncommon for a Baltimore firm to offer credit for up to six, twelve or even eighteen months on large cargoes. This kind of practice was common in the specie-poor colonial period, but such liberal terms existed in very few places after 1800. Indeed, many Philadelphia merchants openly criticized the Baltimore practice. Charles Buck took special note of loose credit arrangements made by German mercantile houses in Baltimore, which he considered “altogether wild and would give but little credit to the Germans, if I would give further details of the ruinous consequences which occurred.” Western Pennsylvanians saw matters differently. After two decades of hardship following the Revolution, in which backcountry farmers and shopkeepers had groaned under the harsh conditions set down by Philadelphia creditors, the Baltimoreans’ liberal credit arrangements seemed inspired.²⁹

Liberal credit terms made the difference with William Moore of Carlisle. In 1803, Moore declared that “in consequence of a late arrangement made with one amongst the first mercantile Houses in Baltimore [James West], he [was] enabled to sell his goods from 5 to 10 per cent cheaper than” in Philadelphia. The arrangement proved profitable

²⁹ Charles N. Buck, *Memoirs of Charles N. Buck: Interspersed with Private Anecdotes and Events of the Times from 1791 to 1841* (Philadelphia: Walnut House, 1941), 55. For a discussion of how the often harsh terms set down by Philadelphia creditors combined with the fiscal and monetary policies of state and federal government to worsen the hard times of the 1780s and 1790s in Pennsylvania, see Terry Bouton, “‘No wonder the times were troublesome:’ The Origins of Fries Rebellion, 1783-1799,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67 (2000): 21-42. Although Bouton’s article primarily focuses on economic conditions and causes of rebellion in Bucks, Berks, and Northampton Counties in southeastern Pennsylvania, his conclusions are instructive for

for Baltimore merchant James West. Between 1802 and 1804, Moore's purchases of fabric, silk, gloves, pewter, and ivory combs alone totaled more than £200.³⁰ Not all arrangements ended as pleasantly. Charles Poor's letterbook revealed that many York county residents contracted debts to Baltimore creditors, and eventually lost their entire estate. In a letter to William Stansbury of Baltimore dated April 28, 1817, Poor enclosed a note from J. C. Kleins of the York company Bishop and Kleins, to the order of William Stansbury for \$278.97. Poor feared that Stansbury would "think I did not do well in taking a Note," but assured his Baltimore contact that "it was the best that could be done at the time." By June 1817, Kleins "made up his mind to transfer all his property, except what the sheriff holds, to Trustees for the benefit of his Creditors generally and that he has written his Creditors in Balto [Baltimore] to that effect."³¹ The experience of Bishop and Kleins notwithstanding, Baltimore's business community was renowned for its liberal credit terms in the early nineteenth century.

Reduced discounts on western bank notes provided another means by which Baltimore merchants and artisans sought to increase their share of the backcountry retail trade. As historian Charles Sellers argued, the "banks' contribution to the takeoff of a capital-hungry economy can hardly be exaggerated." By providing "an ample circulating medium" of bank notes, they threw off the yoke of the old specie-poor economy. Numbering just 29 nationwide in 1800, the number of banks in the republic surpassed

Pennsylvania as a whole.

³⁰ Ridner, "'A Handsomely Improved Place'," 300-03.

³¹ Charles Poor to William Stansbury, April 28, 1817, June 25, 1817, and June 30, 1817, in Charles Poor Letterbook, BR-99, Historical Society of York County.

200 by 1815.³² However, the flurry of new bank notes provided only limited utility to backcountry residents trading with merchants and artisans in coastal cities. Although city banks normally traded their notes at face value with notes drawn on banks in other major cities, notes drawn on backcountry banks were heavily discounted. This practice arose due to the poor lines of communication in the early nineteenth century as it was impossible to know at the time of a transaction whether or not the western bank on which the notes were drawn was still in business. To hedge their risks, coastal merchants and artisans accepted western paper at large discounts, effectively devaluing the currency. This practice rendered trade increasingly less profitable for farmers or retailers in the western parts of the backcountry.

To gain a competitive advantage in western Pennsylvania, Baltimoreans sometimes pegged their exchange rates for western paper lower than what Philadelphians typically offered. In Chambersburg, one Baltimore firm advertised that merchandise would be sold “at reduced [rates] for WESTERN BANK PAPER.”³³ By offering reduced prices on merchandise for transactions completed using western bank notes was the equivalent of trading backcountry notes at par or close to it. This made trading with Baltimore more profitable than trading with Philadelphia for backcountry retailers and farmers. Of course, Baltimoreans who offered these arrangements risked the possibility of accepting large amounts of worthless bank paper, but they hoped the potential for a more lucrative trade outweighed the increased risks. As transportation links to the

³² Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 45, and Curtis Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 338.

³³ *Democratic Republican and Pennsylvanian Advertiser* (Chambersburg), March 5, 1816, March 19, 1816, July 29, 1816, and May 12, 1817.

backcountry steadily improved during the nineteenth century, communication improved too, and thus merchants and artisans accepted more and more western bank notes at face value.

THE TURNPIKE CRAZE

The Pennsylvania legislature soon struck back at the commercial challengers from Baltimore. The early success of the Lancaster Turnpike encouraged eastern Pennsylvanians to extend the state's road improvement program to preserve Philadelphia's backcountry trade. Better transportation links meant reduced freightage costs for backcountry farmers as well as Philadelphia merchants and artisans, and so the city's business community invested heavily in turnpike construction. The 62-mile-long Lancaster Turnpike, completed in 1794 at a staggering cost of \$465,000, provided the first link in Pennsylvania's network. The much shorter Lancaster and Susquehanna Turnpike, completed in 1803, provided the second. Together, these roads secured the trade of the eastern Susquehanna Valley for Philadelphia. Beginning in 1803, the Pennsylvania legislature created a number of additional turnpike companies designed to connect the Philadelphia market more firmly to western Pennsylvania. Once the plan was fully implemented, turnpikes would connect Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, effectively leaping over Baltimore and capturing the trade of both western Pennsylvania and the Ohio River Valley beyond.³⁴

The creation of state-chartered turnpike companies represented a new step in American transportation, as governments resigned direct control over road building along

³⁴ Joseph Durrenberger, *Turnpikes: A Study of the Toll Road Movement in the Middle Atlantic States and Maryland* (Cos Cob, CT: John Edwards, 1968), 51-52.

major routes to private companies. The construction of these new roads required enormous financial commitments, but Americans proved eager to invest. By 1800 there were 72 profit-seeking turnpike companies in the Northeastern United States. By 1810, this number had multiplied into the thousands. Albert Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury under President Jefferson, reported to Congress that “the general utility of artificial roads and canals, is at this time so universally admitted, as hardly to require any additional proofs.” By 1820, Americans had invested \$30,000,000 in turnpike construction, and built over 10,000 miles of improved roadway.³⁵

Despite the extraordinary efforts needed to finance and build the nation’s first turnpike system, the importance of these new roads in the growth of the market economy after 1800 is a vastly underrated topic in the American historical imagination. Since the publication of George Taylor’s landmark 1951 study on the transportation revolution, historians have traditionally dismissed turnpikes as financially disastrous and of questionable utility in establishing new markets.³⁶ Taylor pointed out that of New

³⁵ *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury [Albert Gallatin] on the Subject of Public Roads and Canals* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968; orig. 1808), 5. Also see Robert Heilbroner and Aaron Singer, *The Economic Transformation of America: 1600 to the Present*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 91-92; and Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940*, 2d ed., (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 148.

³⁶ There are exceptions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, new highway construction for automobiles aroused historical interest in the nation’s first turnpike craze a century earlier. Donald C. Jackson provides a good overview of these works in “Roads Most Traveled: Turnpikes in Southeastern Pennsylvania in the Early Republic,” in Judith A. McGaw, ed., *Early American Technology: Making & Doing Things from the Colonial Era to 1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 200-01. Several more recent studies also recognize the importance of turnpikes in early nineteenth-century market development. See especially James Weston Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry, 1780-1860* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1947), 1-54; Charles Alexander Williams, “The History and Operations of the Pennsylvania Turnpike System” (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh, 1954); Robert Hunter, “Turnpike Construction in Antebellum Virginia,” *Technology and Culture*, 4 (1963): 177-200; and Daniel Jones, *The Economic and Social Transformation of Rural Rhode Island*,

England's 230 turnpikes built before 1820, only five or six covered their costs, and of these, none yielded sufficient dividends to justify the opportunity costs of the invested capital. Other historians have condemned turnpikes as poorly surfaced roads, little different from common roads of colonial America that were "virtually useless as avenues of commerce." Canals and railroads are seen as successful transportation innovations because these improvements spurred the "development of bond markets" and helped create trade where it previously did not exist.³⁷ Discounting the importance of turnpikes also suggests that the transportation revolution as a concept must be pushed well into the nineteenth century. Charles Sellers actually identified the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 as the true beginning of the transportation revolution, and concluded that by the 1840s, not the 1810s, "a northeastern sectional economy was integrating the port/hinterland economies."³⁸

The characterization of early nineteenth-century turnpikes as poorly surfaced roads, little different from ruddy colonial roads, is a much-repeated historical myth. When building the new turnpikes of the early nineteenth century, designers addressed many of the problems that plagued travelers on the older colonial roads. Surveyors paid greater attention to a road's elevation, which proved critical to haulers pulling

1780-1850 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992). It should also be noted that since the early 1970s, historians of eighteenth-century Great Britain have placed considerable importance on the role of turnpikes in the creation of the market economy and the economic integration of England and Scotland. See especially W.I. Albert, *The Turnpike Road System in England, 1663-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), and Eric Pawson, *Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of Eighteenth Century Britain* (London: Academic Press, 1977), 265-339.

³⁷ George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), and Atack and Passell, *A New Economic View*, 144, 148-54.

³⁸ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 43.

increasingly larger loads over ever-greater distances. Albert Gallatin reported that “the general principles of improved roads” included “diminishing the angle of ascent, which ought not to exceed, whenever practicable, 3 degrees and a half, and under no circumstances five degrees.” Stumps and other impediments normally left in older roadways were removed, while ditches and drains were added “to prevent the injury caused by standing water.” Instead of a unimproved road surface, crushed stone or gravel ten to eighteen inches thick was laid down to create a stable, weather-resistant surface. The preferred types of stone included granite or flint, and if these materials were unavailable, quartz or blue lime stone. Unlike colonial roads, turnpikes could withstand heavy traffic. Building and then maintaining these thoroughfares proved costly. Quarrying, transporting, crushing, and laying these improved road beds produced most of the expense associated with turnpikes, whose cost could run upwards of \$15,000 per mile. For most of Maryland’s major through ways, costs averaged between \$7,000 and \$10,000 per mile.³⁹ Despite the financial burden, however, many companies along major routes sustained a constant vigil over the repair and upkeep of these roads. In April 1815, the directors of the York and Maryland Line Turnpike Company recognized “the present unprofitable circumstance of the road” and resolved to abolish the salaries of the company’s president and managers. Nevertheless, they decided in August “to take up a loan for the use of the Company” to finish repairs on the road, and authorized William Cole and Joseph Townshend to borrow up to \$3,000 for that purpose. As the superintendent of the road had estimated the cost of repairs at only \$1,000, the generous amount of the loan suggests a real desire to insure that the repairs be completed in a

³⁹ *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, 60-61, 63. Also see Jackson, “Roads Most Traveled,” 206-15.

timely fashion.⁴⁰

The improvements in road design clearly set the new turnpikes apart from earlier roadways. A letter from Baltimore's John Gibson to his wife in 1816 illustrates the ease that Marylanders traversed the Maryland and Pennsylvania backcountries along the new turnpikes. Gibson wrote that he "arrived at Reisters Town about 1/2 past 6 o'clock with scarcely any fatigue to any of our party." Compared to the experience of earlier travelers, who complained of being severely bruised at the end of a journey, Gibson's comment is illuminating. He evidently took a more leisurely pace than freighting wagons, taking an early breakfast and "indulging ourselves 2 or 3 hours at Winchester before arriving at "this well known spot" at 7 o'clock. Gettysburg did not enter the national consciousness until the Civil War battle in 1863, yet this town was already a "well known spot" to Gibson in 1816. He concluded that "tomorrow we design continuing our journey as far as Chambersburg, 36 miles, and will if every thing should proceed favourably move on steadily till we reach Bedford 100 miles further." He expected to find mail from his wife awaiting him in Bedford too, as "the mail travels so much faster than we do."⁴¹

Beyond the issues involved with road construction, several historians have questioned the usefulness and effectiveness of turnpikes because of their limited influence on financial markets and questionable profitability. There is no reason why the creation of a bond or stock market should rank as an important consideration in whether or not a transportation innovation should be deemed successful. Even the direct

⁴⁰ York and Maryland Line Turnpike Company Accounts, MS.934, Historical Society of York County.

⁴¹ John Gibson to Mrs. Gibson, June 16, 1816, Grundy-Gibson Papers, MS.1294, MHS, and James Callender, *The American Annual Register, or, historical memoirs of the United States for the Year 1796* (Philadelphia: Bioren and Madan, 1797), 36.

profitability of a turnpike, whether based on its operational costs, tolls collected, or dividends issued to investors, may not be an adequate measure of its economic value. The lack of financial returns on his turnpike stocks did not stop Baltimore merchant Frederick Hammer from buying almost 700 shares in various turnpike companies between 1805 and 1817, totaling over \$13,000. Hammer was not an uninformed investor. In the same period he also purchased nearly 400 shares of stock in banks, manufacturing and insurance companies, and kept a detailed accounting of his portfolio. His accounts for November 22, 1817 showed the total purchase price for all bank stocks at \$17,851.36 with a current value of \$20,363.86. His dividends on all bank, insurance and manufacturing stocks between 1800 and 1817 totaled over \$9,000. Yet Hammer made little effort to account for the value of his turnpike stocks, and his total dividends on these stocks amounted to only \$4,000 over twelve years.⁴²

The reason why Hammer continued to pour money into turnpike company stocks was to benefit his own trade with the backcountry. As a leading merchant in Baltimore's trade with Germany, he found a ready market for retail goods among the German-speaking settlers in western Maryland and Pennsylvania. Over 75 percent of his turnpike investment was in the Baltimore and Reisterstown and Baltimore and Fredericktown lines, which connected Baltimore to the Maryland and Pennsylvania backcountry. These turnpikes helped reduce his transport costs, and thus Hammer made up for the lack of dividends or stock appreciation by helping reduce his overhead costs. Frederick Hammer's investment history helps demonstrate that the only relevant criteria upon which to judge the success of a turnpike is the extent to which it reduces transportation

⁴² Frederick Hammer Account Books, volume 1, MS.423, MHS.

costs and augments commerce relative to the expenses incurred by its upkeep.

Companies like the York and Maryland Line, which governed major backcountry routes, maintained level, superior roads that successfully reduced wagon hauling rates by as much as 50 percent, effectively doubling the size of a seaport city's commercial hinterland. Charles Sellers pointed out, however, that even with such impressive results, transport costs still remained too great "for high-weight-to-value commodities such as grain." Other historians have extended this argument, observing that at a mere 80 miles, transport costs for wheat exceeded 50 percent of the commodity's market price in 1815. Such measures are largely meaningless for Baltimore, which was already an entrepot for western Pennsylvania grain by the 1760s. Unlike New England, where bringing backcountry produce to a seaport was an important function of a turnpike, Baltimore's merchants did not need to rely on improved roads to make the grain trade profitable. Instead, Baltimore's turnpikes were built to bring retail goods to the backcountry, and Sellers and other historians agree that a 50 percent reduction in transport costs did open the countryside to consumer goods brought at lower cost from coastal cities. For merchants like Frederick Hammer, turnpikes were crucial in capturing western Pennsylvania's return trade.⁴³

After 1803, Pennsylvania legislators realized that the Lancaster Pike and its extensions, which effectively ended the threat of Baltimore competition in the eastern Susquehanna Valley, ironically provided a conduit from the troublesome Maryland city into the heart of western Pennsylvania. Continued turnpike construction along a southern route benefited Baltimore as much as Philadelphia, and thus the legislature approved

⁴³ Atack and Passell, *A New Economic View*, 148-49, and Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 41.

construction of several turnpikes along a northern line arching away from Baltimore. To this end, the Downingtown, Ephrata, and Harrisburg Turnpike, or Horseshoe Pike, was patented in 1803. Longer than the Lancaster Pike by a little more than five miles, it provided the first leg of the Pittsburgh Pike, connecting Philadelphia to Pittsburgh by way of Harrisburg. No Maryland roads connected to it, and it provided a way of keeping Baltimore's merchants from using Pennsylvania's internal improvements to their own commercial advantage. The Pennsylvania legislature approved charters for nine more turnpike companies along the northern route. When finally completed, the Pittsburgh Pike stretched 353 miles, cost over \$2,000,000 to build, connected ten separate turnpikes together, and linked Trenton and Philadelphia in the east, with Pittsburgh and Steubenville, Ohio in the west. The scope of the titanic building program clearly demonstrated the intent of the Pennsylvania government to insure that the backcountry trade remained squarely anchored at Philadelphia.⁴⁴

In order to encourage as much traffic towards the Pittsburgh Pike as possible, the Pennsylvania legislature also patented the Lancaster, Elizabethtown and Middleton Turnpike in 1804. This road provided a more northern route away from Baltimore for travelers who wished to cross the Susquehanna River by way of Lancaster. Finally,

⁴⁴ Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry*, 53, and Durrenberger, *Turnpikes*, 56. U.S. Route 30 follows the basic path of the original Lancaster Pike. Pennsylvania Route 322 traces the basic path of the original Downingtown, Ephrata and Harrisburg Pike. The east-west section of the present-day Pennsylvania Turnpike, which forms the beginning of Interstate 76, follows the basic path of the original Pittsburgh Pike. The ten corporations that made up the original Pittsburgh Pike included the Frankford and Bristol Turnpike, the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike, the Lancaster, Elizabeth and Middletown Turnpike (taking the route west by northwest), the Middletown and Harrisburg Turnpike (taking the route due north), the Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Chambersburg Turnpike (returning the road system south, to a parallel with Philadelphia), the Chambersburg and Bedford Turnpike, the Bedford and Stoystown Turnpike, the Stoystown and Greensburg Turnpike, the Greensburg and Pittsburgh Turnpike (again, taking the route northwest), and the Pittsburgh and Steubenville Turnpike.

instead of patenting a road leading north from either York or Harrisburg into the Upper Susquehanna Valley, the legislature authorized the construction of the Centre Turnpike. A magnificent seventy-five-mile road patented in 1805, it connected Philadelphia with Reading, and then went directly across the state to Sunbury on the Susquehanna River.⁴⁵

The Maryland assembly took full advantage of Baltimore's proximity to Pennsylvania's roads when crafting Maryland's own turnpike system. By comparison to Pennsylvania's massive projects, Maryland's 1804 building program included four rather small turnpikes linking Baltimore to its northern and western hinterland. Despite their limited size, these four turnpike companies insured Baltimore's merchants and artisans of a firm grip on western Pennsylvania's trade. The Baltimore and Frederick Turnpike provided the first link. An extension of this road connected Frederick to Elizabeth Town, which was renamed Hagerstown after 1814. A spur from Hagerstown crossed the Pennsylvania state line and connected with roads leading to Chambersburg, PA. The second link in the Cumberland Turnpike, which continued west from Hagerstown and connected with the eastern terminus of the federally-financed National Road at Cumberland, Maryland. This network of roads connected the western Maryland backcountry as well as the Chambersburg market to Baltimore.⁴⁶

The Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike, which forked at Reisterstown to the northwest of Baltimore, was the third link. It had two spurs leading into Pennsylvania. The first connected to Pennsylvania's Hanover and Maryland Line Turnpike, patented in

⁴⁵ Livingood, *Trade Rivalry*, 43-47. For a different perspective on Pennsylvania's developmental strategy for its backcountry, see Carl Lechner, "The Erie Triangle: The Final Link Between Philadelphia and the Great Lakes," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 116 (1992): 59-85.

⁴⁶ Baltimore and Frederick Turnpike Company Records, volume 1, MS.46, MHS.

1808. From Hanover, produce could be sent directly to and from Carlisle in Cumberland County. The second spur lead directly to Gettysburg in Adams County. Finally, the Baltimore and York Town Turnpike lead directly north from Baltimore and connected with Pennsylvania's York and Maryland Line Turnpike, patented in 1807. The York Town Pike and the Reisterstown Pike provided Baltimore's transportation links to the western Susquehanna Valley.⁴⁷

Although most of Pennsylvania's new turnpikes were patented before Baltimore's, Maryland completed its connections first. The fast completion of the Maryland roads owed in part to their relatively smaller size, and to the concerted effort made by Baltimore's business community in financing their construction. Roads leading to the Pennsylvania-Maryland state line would have proved of limited utility, however, if the completion of corresponding turnpikes linking western Pennsylvania to the state line had been delayed. To make sure these projects were finished in a timely fashion, Baltimoreans invested heavily in the Pennsylvania turnpike companies which benefited the Maryland market. The limited scope of the Maryland projects, which required far less capital than the longer Pennsylvania roads, made such a strategy possible.

The York and Maryland Line Turnpike accounts provide an excellent example of this kind of targeted investment. Four prominent Baltimore merchants and four Baltimore insurance companies were among the ten largest stockholders in this Pennsylvania turnpike in 1814. Robert Oliver led all individual investors with twenty shares. William Patterson held ten shares, Baltimore mayor James Calhoun held eight shares, and Robert Gilmor & Son held eight shares. What is far more interesting is that

⁴⁷ York Town-Baltimore Turnpike Company Minute Books, volume 1, MS.52, MHS, and Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company Accounts, MS.50, MHS.

several Baltimore insurance companies easily ranked as the largest controlling interests in the turnpike company. The Union Insurance Company owned more than a one-hundred shares, the Maryland Insurance Company was close behind with ninety-five, the Marine Insurance Company owned ninety shares, and the Chesapeake Insurance Company held thirty-six shares. Between them, the top three insurance companies actually held a majority interest in the York and Maryland Line Turnpike, and the eight Baltimore investors amongst the top ten owned a total of sixty-seven percent of the company. By pooling resources in insurance companies and using them like investment houses, Baltimore's less affluent investors reduced their risk and insured a large voting block in the York and Maryland Line Turnpike Company. This use of the insurance companies is perhaps the clearest manifestation of a community-wide, or corporate effort by Baltimore's merchants to expand the city's hinterland into the Pennsylvania backcountry. The York and Maryland Line was not the only Pennsylvania transportation project usurped by Baltimore's business community. The York and Conewago Turnpike, a separate company which also connected York to the Maryland Line, was "supported by Maryland funds and had a Baltimore man as its president."⁴⁸

By 1809, Baltimoreans had substantially completed their turnpike connections to western Pennsylvania, while most of the new roads leading to Philadelphia remained under construction. During a trip into the western Susquehanna Valley, Joshua Gilpin, a Philadelphia resident and great supporter of internal improvements, fretted that "the roads from Baltimore are numerous so that the whole produce of this country goes direct to that town & not to Philadelphia." A note of admiration shaded his concerns, as he

⁴⁸ York and Maryland Line Turnpike Company Accounts, MS.934, Historical Society of York County, and Livingood, *Trade Rivalry*, 49.

commended “the zeal with which Marylanders are improving the carriage from this State.” Ultimately, however, he feared “that the produce of this part of [Pennsylvania] will undoubtedly centre in Baltimore” rather than Philadelphia. Gilpin’s uneasiness had merit. Flour inspections at Baltimore topped 530,000 barrels in 1811, a fifty percent increase over its average of 350,000 barrels inspected between 1800 and 1810. Unlike New York, Philadelphia, or Alexandria, Baltimore experienced a steady growth in flour inspections immediately following the War of 1812, and remained the nation’s leading flour port until 1827.⁴⁹

Philadelphia’s business community needed to take action quickly, and appealed once again to the state government for help. In an unprecedented action, the Pennsylvania legislature appropriated \$825,000 in 1811 for the improvement of roads and bridges. For the first time, public money would be spent to support a turnpike company. In an obvious attempt to shore up the western trade against any further Baltimore encroachments, the legislature mandated that the northern route away from Baltimore receive top priority. Consequently, the Pittsburgh Pike was given \$350,000 of the appropriation.⁵⁰

Despite vast allocations of public resources and the best efforts of the Pennsylvania legislature to devise a road system that would isolate Baltimore, tapping western Pennsylvania’s markets proved relatively easy for the Maryland city. Baltimore

⁴⁹ Joshua Gilpin, “A Tour from Philadelphia in 1809,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 50 (1936): 169; Jared Sparks, “Baltimore,” *North American Review*, 20 (1825): 122; and *Niles’ Weekly Register*, June 7, 1828, April 4, 1829, July 24, 1830, and March 26, 1831. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 helped vault New York quickly past Baltimore as the nation’s leading center for flour inspection. By 1830, New York inspected one-third more flour than the Maryland port, although Baltimore remained considerably ahead of either Philadelphia or Alexandria.

⁵⁰ Durrenberger, *Turnpikes*, 48.

had geography on its side, and the Maryland legislature took full advantage of this good fortune. Baltimore's roads reached Carlisle first when the Hanover and Carlisle Turnpike was completed in 1812, and when Pennsylvania completed its connection to Bedford by way of the Chambersburg and Bedford Turnpike, the route proved as advantageous to Baltimoreans as to their eastern rivals.⁵¹ Originally conceived as part of the Pittsburgh Pike, and thus a means of the circumventing Baltimore, the strategy backfired when the turnpike linking Harrisburg to Chambersburg was not completed until 1818.

Baltimoreans established their connections by 1815, as a spur off the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike led directly to Gettysburg, and the Hagerstown extension of the Baltimore and Frederick Turnpike led directly to Chambersburg. Baltimoreans thus benefited from a state-of-the-art turnpike system in the backcountry paid for in large measure by Philadelphia merchants and the Pennsylvania legislature. Smaller, cheaper, and smarter, the Maryland turnpike system played a significant role in helping integrate Baltimore into the Pennsylvania backcountry's burgeoning markets.

TRANSFORMATIONS

If the success of a turnpike is measured by whether or not it created new markets, then collectively, Baltimore's turnpike links to the western Susquehanna Valley must be considered a failure. In this region, turnpikes only proved effective in augmenting the retail and export trades in markets that Baltimoreans had previously secured through marketing and liberal credit terms. However, the new turnpike links to the Susquehanna Valley did facilitate a vastly increased volume of trade to and from Baltimore, which is

⁵¹ *Pennsylvania Senate Journal*, vol. 1821-22, Report of the Committee on Roads, Bridges, and Inland Navigation.

just as important to the development of a regional market as the creation of trade in places where it did not previously exist. In this regard, Baltimore's turnpike links to the western Susquehanna Valley made an important contribution to the integration of the mid-Atlantic region.

In a few places, however, Baltimore's turnpikes succeeded brilliantly by establishing new markets for the city's merchants and artisans—specifically, in the Juniata Valley and the mountainous regions of western Pennsylvania. Although a less populous area than the Susquehanna Valley, the Juniata Valley maintained a number of significant business establishments. William Reynolds of Bedford purchased over \$6,000 in merchandise and sold almost \$8,700 worth of whiskey to Baltimore's Timanus and Company between 1817 and 1819.⁵² From the Baltimore firm's perspective, Reynolds alone accounted for one-eighth of their total supply of whiskey, and one-half of the whiskey arriving from Pennsylvania. From the Pennsylvania side of the trade, the regularity of shipments indicated an exclusive connection to the Baltimore market. The enormous size of this trade also suggests that Baltimore merchandise found a very loyal market in Bedford County.

Lewis Mytinger, a merchant shopkeeper in Huntingdon County, established a triangular trade involving Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Alexandria, Pennsylvania. Born Johan Ludwig Meitinger in Lancaster County, Mytinger married Catherine Cleckner in Carlisle and then left the Susquehanna Valley to pursue a career in trade. His firm, Mytinger and Crawford, purchased bar iron forged locally in Huntingdon County, and then sold it to William Porter and George Anshultz in Pittsburgh. Using the profits from

⁵² Timanus and Company Ledger, MHS.

the iron trade, the firm then shipped butter and whiskey to Baltimore where they bought dry goods and manufactured products.⁵³ During the rest of the year, Mytinger and Crawford operated a store Alexandria, Pennsylvania where they sold Baltimore merchandise to residents of Huntingdon County. In a later business, Mytinger operated a store with his son, George Mytinger, in neighboring Waterstreet, Pennsylvania. Although no entries for either Pittsburgh or Baltimore appeared in the later accounts, an identical trade pattern emerged to the one seen previously at the store in Alexandria. It thus seems probable that the Mytingers continued this triangular trade.⁵⁴

Further to the west in Fayette County, the New Geneva General Store occupied an important place in connecting the county to a larger regional network. This business, which included another store at Smithfield, Pennsylvania, imported merchandise from Baltimore, sold part of it in Fayette County, and reshipped part of it to the Pittsburgh firm of Cromwell and Dobbin. The New Geneva Store also acted as a financial clearing house for transactions between Cromwell and Dobbin, Andrew and John Oliphant, and Albert Gallatin.⁵⁵ In May 1818 alone, the store paid seven Baltimore firms, (including the Meredith and Mummer firm active in the Harrisburg trade with John Close,) a total of \$3,089.36 for “sundry” merchandise. In August, September and October, the store added an additional \$1,748.16 in Baltimore merchandise to their inventory. Unlike the

⁵³ Mytinger and Crawford Account Book, C2.34, Huntingdon County Historical Society. On June 18 and July 16, 1808, the company sent 171 3/4 pounds of butter and eight barrels of whiskey to Baltimore. They returned from Baltimore with £195.17.5 worth of merchandise in June, and £918 worth of merchandise in July.

⁵⁴ Lewis Mytinger and George Mytinger, Waterstreet Account Book, C4.27, Huntingdon County Historical Society.

⁵⁵ New Geneva General Store Day Book, MSS.58, The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Mytinger operation, the Geneva Store did not establish a triangular trading network. By acting as a middleman in the dry goods trade and a quasi-bank for Fayette County residents, however, the store did effectively secure the area for the Baltimore market.

Philadelphia merchants and artisans were not wholly absent from the region. Thanks to the Pittsburgh Pike, Philadelphians seemingly dominated the retail trade in Westmoreland County, located immediately to the east of Pittsburgh. Between 1803 and 1805, five of the ten shopkeepers appearing in Greensburg's *The Farmers Register* advertised the arrival of goods from Philadelphia. None of the shopkeepers mentioned merchandise from Baltimore. In addition, two Philadelphia firms advertised directly, and a notice appeared concerning the dissolution of the Philadelphia partnership of George Thompson and Enoch Price.⁵⁶ For this kind of advertisement to be worth publishing in a Greensburg newspaper, the firm must have carried a number of outstanding accounts with local residents; otherwise, notice of the dissolution could have been handled by personal communication. Thompson and Price's notice suggests that the Philadelphia business community was well established to the Westmoreland market.

In Pittsburgh itself, a more balanced split emerged between Baltimore and Philadelphia. In *The Pittsburgh Mercury* between 1811 and 1816, two shopkeepers advertised Baltimore goods, two advertised Philadelphia goods, and one offered goods from both cities. Seven Philadelphia firms advertised directly, while only one advertisement from a Baltimore firm appeared.⁵⁷ Both Baltimore and Philadelphia

⁵⁶ They included Harry Weaver, Jr., John Wells, David Marchland, Thomas Hoge, and M. P. Cassily. *The Farmers Register*, December 17, 1803, February 25, 1804, August 13, 1804, and November 30, 1804, December 21, 1804, and April 12, 1805.

⁵⁷ For the Baltimore connections, see *The Pittsburgh Mercury*, September 26, 1811, October 15, 1812, April 1, 1813, July 22, 1813, and November 4, 1813. For the Philadelphia connections, see

merchants tried to strengthen their commercial ties by establishing partnerships in Pittsburgh and setting up their own warehouse operations. The emerging market proved important enough for the Baltimore firm of A. J. and E. Lewis and to waive any additional price increases to cover freightage, and sell merchandise at Baltimore prices. Philadelphia druggists Speakman and Say took a different approach to courting Pittsburgh interests. They announced that “having established a drug and chemical warehouse in Pittsburgh, and taken Samuel Pettigrew [of Pittsburgh] into partnership,” they hoped “to sell at the lowest Philadelphia prices, with the addition of carriage expenses only.”⁵⁸ Pittsburghers would have to pay for freightage, but they could also be assured that the Philadelphia firm of Speakman and Say shared its profits with local merchants.

The Pittsburgh firm of Cromwell and Dobbin imported Baltimore goods through Fayette County, but Philadelphia’s infiltration of the Monongahela Valley is immediately evident from the ledgers of William Foster and Ebenezer Denny’s store.⁵⁹ In 1807 and 1808, Denny and Foster received all of their merchandise directly from Philadelphia firms, with the exception of six purchases made with Chambersburg merchants. Their acquisitions included brushes, groceries, coffee, sugar, tobacco, medicine, stationary, and other goods readily available in both Baltimore and Philadelphia. It is possible that the Chambersburg sales included some Baltimore merchandise, but the six transactions only amounted to \$299.64. In their fifty-five transactions with eighteen different Philadelphia

The Pittsburgh Mercury, January 11, 1812, July 15, 1813, March 23, 1814, May 11, 1814, May 18, 1814, August 10, 1814, April 20, 1816, and June 22, 1816.

⁵⁸ *The Pittsburgh Mercury*, May 27, 1813, and June 10, 1813.

⁵⁹ Ebenezer Denny (1761-1822) also served as Pittsburgh’s first mayor.

firms, Denny and Foster acquired over \$12,000 worth of merchandise and commodities from the eastern metropolis. Simon Gratz represented their most significant commercial link, providing over \$2,300 in coffee, sugar, and groceries.⁶⁰

Unlike the Susquehanna or Juniata Valleys, which adopted complimentary roles in what Allan Pred described as the “intricate, crisscrossing economic relationships” between small towns and metropolises, Pittsburgh became an urban center in its own right. By 1810, Pittsburgh’s mercantile community had also established its own commercial networks in Kentucky and throughout the Ohio-Mississippi River Valley system down to New Orleans.⁶¹ Merchants and artisans from New York, Cincinnati, Louisville, and New England recognized the importance of the emergent city, and patronized Pittsburgh newspapers as frequently as their Baltimore and Philadelphia counterparts. In 1812, Pittsburgh’s B. Bowen and Company offered textiles “direct from the New England factories.” In 1817, the Louisville, Kentucky firm of Allen and Grant, as well as the Cincinnati firm Jeremiah Neave and Son, placed advertisements in *The Pittsburgh Mercury*.⁶² The Baltimore-Philadelphia trade rivalry certainly continued in the Monongahela Valley, but it played a secondary role in a larger story.

The renewed interest in developing the backcountry during the early nineteenth century produced significant economic change for both rural Pennsylvania and urban

⁶⁰ Ledger of Denny and Foster, 1807-1808, Denny-O’Hara Family Papers, MSS.51, The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

⁶¹ Pred, *Urban Growth*, 2. Also see Solomon Buck and Elizabeth Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939), 288-317; Reginald Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 154-162; and R. Eugene Harper, *The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 1770-1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).

⁶² *The Pittsburgh Mercury*, October 29, 1812, May 11, 1816, and June 22, 1816.

Baltimore. The tremendous surge in marketing, the extension of credit, and the construction of turnpikes in the backcountry after the Panic of 1797 fundamentally altered the lives of western Pennsylvanians. The expansion of Baltimore's hinterland also helped break the city's dependence on foreign markets. Overseas commerce remained a fundamental part of Baltimore's economy throughout the nineteenth century, but the city never again proved as vulnerable to price shocks from Europe. Instead of simply being an entrepot for backcountry grain, Baltimore emerged as a market center for a developing regional economy. The competition sparked between Baltimore and Philadelphia for the backcountry trade continued for decades, integrating both cities into an emerging mid-Atlantic economy, and transforming the post-colonial system into the early national economy—one dedicated to internal improvements and market development. The transformation would exact a toll on the traditional social order, however, and its effects would not be limited to the backcountry.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE URBAN TRANSITION

From the Potomac to the Monongahela, retail goods flooded into backcountry shops, agricultural output expanded, and new roads stretched across the countryside after 1800. In Baltimore, the impressive growth of the backcountry trade helped end the hard times of the late 1790s and launched a new era of economic expansion. The degree and scope of the changes overtaking the mid-Atlantic region could be seen as part of a market revolution, the interpretive construct that has recently dominated much of the scholarship on the early republic. Yet the term *market revolution* may obscure more than it explains the social and economic changes taking shape in the early-nineteenth century. First, the surge of economic activity in the backcountry did not create markets where none had previously existed. Baltimore had long-served as an entrepot for these farms, connecting the backcountry to the Atlantic economy. The difference in the nineteenth century was the new focus on marketing, transportation innovation, and credit reform to secure backcountry markets rather than those overseas. The eighteenth-century economy primarily focused on commerce in the Atlantic world; the nineteenth-century transition heralded an economy that gravitated more and more to the backcountry and the American West.

The creation of a regional market did not always produce the same social and cultural consequences in rural and urban America. In western Maryland and western Pennsylvania, as in most other parts of the backcountry, economic expansion did not result in a rapid transformation of either the *mentalité* or their traditional social order of society. With the exception of a few urbanized communities, like Lancaster, York,

Carlisle, and Frederick, the market revolution precipitated only halting social evolution in rural America. Most farmers and rural households continued to produce for both the family farm and the market, preserving what historian Richard Bushman referred to as the porous boundary between household and market production which characterized the “composite farm” of colonial America.¹

The persistence of composite farms owed in part to a deliberate strategy by backcountry farmers. By maintaining a subsistence base of production, farmers partially insulated themselves against market fluctuations. This became increasingly important as the market economy expanded, and thus most rural Americans continued to favor “competency” rather than profit, and reciprocal local exchanges rather than market competition. Composite farms continued to dominate American agriculture throughout the nineteenth century, encouraging an evolutionary process of social change. “In short,” according to historian Christopher Clark, the development “of rural capitalism was defined, not by the adoption of any one particular set of practices, but by the accretion of a series of distinctive forms and organizations that,” over a period which spanned decades, “added up to the creation of capitalism in the countryside.”²

¹ Richard Bushman, “Markets and Composite Farms in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 55 (1998): 364. The literature on the porous nature of the rural British American economy is vast. See especially Carole Shammas, “How Self-sufficient was Early America?,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1982): 247-72; Rona Weiss, “Primitive Accumulation in the United States: The Interaction between Capitalist and Noncapitalist Class Relations in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” *Journal of Economic History*, 42 (1982): 77-82; Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, “Self-sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 41 (1984): 333-64; Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990): 3-29; Allan Kulikoff, “Households and Markets: Toward a New Synthesis of American Agrarian History,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 50 (1993): 342-55; and Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 206-19.

² Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca:

The contrast between the effects of the market revolution on rural America and its effects on the city could not have been any more dramatic. In urban America, the creation of a new regional market economy acted like a catalyst, arousing a frenzy of entrepreneurial activity that redirected and accelerated the sluggish changes of the post-colonial period into a sweeping transformation of the city's social structure. Unlike the methodical creation of capitalism in the countryside, the urban transition occurred with deliberate speed as artisans and merchants scrambled to take advantage of the new economy.

The emerging urban-rural dichotomy in the early nineteenth-century mid-Atlantic presents a wide gulf between the effects of market expansion on the countryside and on the city. If the seaports and the backcountry were intimately dependent on each other to achieve economic growth, and cultural changes in both areas were intertwined, it is not immediately clear how such drastic differences could have been sustained. Contemporaries did not find the urban-rural dichotomy disconcerting, or even unusual.

Cornell University Press, 1990). 15, 17. The classic statements on the pre-capitalist *mentalité* of rural Americans include James Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 35 (1978): 3-32, and Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America." The literature on the often halting progress of capitalist social change in nineteenth-century rural America is substantial. See especially Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Wayne Franklin, *A Rural Carpenter's World: The Craft in a Nineteenth-Century New York Township* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990); Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 13-99; Michael Merrill, "Putting 'Capitalism' in Its Place: A Review of Recent Literature," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 52 (1995): 315-26; and Christopher Clark, "Rural America and the Transition to Capitalism," in Paul Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison: Madison House, 1997), 65-79.

For Adam Smith, rural and urban areas did not, after all, share the same social structures. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Smith argued that “the nature of agriculture . . . does not admit of so many subdivisions of labour, nor of so complete a separation of one business from another, as manufactures.” As a result, “it is impossible to separate so entirely, the business of the grazier from that of the corn-farmer,” whereas “the spinner is almost always a distinct person from the weaver.” The consequences for the social order of each area were quite clear. The “impossibility of making so complete and entire a separation of all the different branches of labour employed in agriculture” meant that “the improvement of the productive powers of labour in this art [agriculture], does not always keep pace with their improvement in manufactures.” The classic model of the household economy familiar to urban Americans never really existed in the countryside according to Smith, and thus rural Americans avoided most of the wrenching changes that transformed cities during the early republic.³

Ironically, Marxist theory has built on Adam Smith’s observations of the rural-urban dichotomy. Since the mid-nineteenth century, farmers have represented a tangled definitional problem for marxist analysis of class struggle. As independent producers who own the means of production, farmers appear to be proto-capitalists. On the other hand, farmers also engaged in class struggles with wealthy magnates and greedy creditors, which suggests they be classified as part of the proletariat. To solve this riddle, Erik Wright proposed a theory of contradictory class locations, arguing that farmers may be located in “more than one class simultaneously,” and may be both dominant and

³ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner, and W.B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), I, 16.

subordinate, exploiter and oppressed. According to Wright, farmers “make complex interclass alliances, tying themselves to capitalists, hoping to join that class, or to workers to regulate capitalist property.” How farmers would then fit into a class revolution is somewhat byzantine, but Wright’s theory does recognize that traditional marxist class divisions between capitalists and workers must be abandoned when studying farmers.⁴ Wright’s analysis largely agrees with Smith’s—the household economies of urban and rural areas did not share the same social structure.

Allan Kulikoff adopted Wright’s idea of contradictory class locations to help explain the market transition in rural America. Kulikoff argued that small, independent farmers resisted the loss of their economic freedom, demonstrating a “capitalist social formation” that had yet to achieve full class separation. “To determine when an area became capitalist,” Kulikoff argued, “one needs to look at the broader society, beyond the farm community.” This brings the question back to the seaports, where the transformation was well under way. A sweeping market revolution in the cities corresponded to the creation of a capitalist social formation in the countryside; the lack of parallel social evolution in rural and urban America should not discount the degree of change experienced in urban areas. This formulation helps explain why the advent of capitalist class relations on farms trailed so far behind the expansion of the markets in the backcountry. Unlike the countryside, Baltimore completed the transition to a new capitalist order within a single generation. Given the lack of parallel social evolution between the two areas, it is not difficult to see how an urban-rural dichotomy either

⁴ Erik Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985), 37-51, 124-126.

emerged or continued for so long.⁵

EARLY INDUSTRIALIZATION

The cornerstone of the urban transition was the growing divergence between manufacturers and traditional artisans. This incipient capitalist class did not appear overnight. In response to social and economic changes on both sides of the Atlantic during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the meaning of the word *manufacturer* had been slowly evolving. By the 1790s, a manufacturer increasingly referred to someone who operated a large-scale operation and pursued production for a regional market, rather than someone who operated a small workshop and produced goods and services for the local economy. The earlier meaning placed manufacturers squarely within the tradition of the household economy; the new meaning redefined manufacturers as capitalists interested in expanding domestic production to reach beyond the immediate community.⁶ By taking advantage of the burgeoning backcountry trade and avidly pursuing market production, manufacturers quickly became the most dynamic part of the republic's economy. They included aggressive entrepreneurs like John Peter Spies, who sought to cash in on the new opportunities in the backcountry, and others who were simply afraid of losing their businesses if they did not adapt to changing circumstances. Although not all of these would-be magnates succeeded, those who did represented the vanguard of an industrial class that eventually dominated American society.⁷

⁵ Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism*, 7-33.

⁶ For the evolution of the word *manufacturer* during the eighteenth century, see the discussion in chapter four.

⁷ Richard Stott, "Artisans and Capitalist Development," in Paul Gilje, ed., *Wages of*

Before 1800, limited access to new technologies hindered the establishment of manufactories as much as the lack of a regional market.⁸ Thus in a few industries, the increased availability of mechanized processes in the early nineteenth century proved just as important as the expansion of the backcountry trade. Grain millers were among the first to benefit from the convergence of these trends. After Oliver Evans revealed the details of his automated grain milling process in his 1795 book, *The Young Millwright and Miller's Guide*, millers began employing his technology without paying him any royalties. The frequency of these offenses led Evans to raise his license fees from \$30 to \$300, and renew his U.S. patent in 1804 under the revised Federal Patent Law of 1800. The new law gave him exclusionary rights over both the use of the machinery specified in the patent as well as all similar machinery designed for the same purpose. He hoped that these actions would stem the tide of mill-owners using his technology without a license, but the measures proved ineffective, particularly in Baltimore. Believing he had no other choice, Evans issued a stern public warning in May 1808 to all Baltimore millers that legal action would be taken against them if they continued to use his technology without a license.⁹ The strong-armed tactics did not have the desired effect. Instead of bowing to pressure, Baltimore's merchant-millers decided turn the tables on Evans by challenging the legal validity of his patent.

Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic (Madison: Madison House, 1997), 101-02.

⁸ See the discussion in chapter four.

⁹ *Baltimore Federal Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, May 30, 1808, and Greville Bathe and Dorothy Bathe, *Oliver Evans: A Chronicle of Early American Engineering* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935), 189. For the most thorough study of the early U.S. patent system, see Carolyn Cooper, *Shaping Invention: Thomas Blanchard's Machinery and Patent Management in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

The U.S. Circuit Court for the Maryland District heard the case of *Oliver Evans v. Samuel Robinson* on December 3, 1811. At the core of the Baltimore plaintiffs' argument was that Baltimore miller Jonathan Ellicott had actually invented the automated grain conveyer, a fundamental part of Evans's process. The court disagreed, and found in favor of Evans. Unsatisfied with the outcome, Baltimore's millers turned to Congress, and enlisted Thomas Jefferson in their cause. Their 1813 "Memorial" to Congress stressed the importance of Ellicott's conveyer, argued that Evans's process produced no more flour than other machinery, and that the savings on labor no longer produced higher revenues.¹⁰ Jefferson's letter supported the idea that Ellicott had invented the conveyer, and that Evans had only added an automated "hopper-boy." Of course, Jefferson did not explain why, as Secretary of State, he had approved Evans's patent in the first place, and this omission certainly did not help the plaintiffs' case. Finally, the millers claimed that "the capacity to manufacture flour had outstripped the supply of grain to the extent that farmers used the competition among millers to inflate the price of wheat."¹¹ The "Memorial" proved unconvincing. Like the Circuit Court, Congress sided with Evans, denying the millers' petition on January 6, 1814. Evans's patent remained in effect until 1818.

The struggle over patent rights and royalties did not retard the spread of automated grain milling in the mid-Atlantic, however, or keep Baltimore's millers from vastly expanding their operations between 1800 and 1812. Industrialization proceeded

¹⁰ George Terry Sharrer, "Flour Milling and the Growth of Baltimore, 1783-1830" (Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 1975), 80-83, and *Memorial to Congress of Sundry Citizens of the United States Praying Relief from the Oppressive Operation of Oliver Evans's Patent* (Baltimore: J. Robinson, 1813).

¹¹ Sharrer, "Flour Milling," 81.

with vigor along the Jones and Gwynn's Falls on the outskirts of the city, and grain milling was not the only industry that benefited from early mechanization. After Jefferson's Embargo in 1807, Baltimore's first significant textile factories appeared. The embargo halted the import of many vital textile imports, and in 1808, the Maryland legislature responded by incorporating the Union Manufacturing Company. With more than 300 investors paying \$50 per share for its stock, and a capitalization of one million dollars, it was easily the largest of the new operations in Baltimore. It was soon followed by two more cotton factories near Baltimore: the Washington Cotton Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1809 with a capitalization of \$100,000, and the Powhatan Cotton Mills, built by Nathan Levering in 1810. The embargo certainly encouraged the industry, but many consumers decided that they actually preferred domestic textiles. This proved especially the true for American-made cotton duck, which quickly replaced the imported linen duck that sailmakers had used as canvas to make ships' sails. The profits made on American textiles convinced others to capitalize on the expanding domestic market. The Athenian Society of Baltimore, which was modeled after the Domestic Society of Philadelphia, built a warehouse to receive and sell American-made textiles on commission. Between 1809 and 1812, sales by the Society jumped from \$17,608 to \$80,893.¹²

Compared to the immense cotton factories in New England, like those on the Merrimack River and the Boston Manufacturing Company in Lowell, Massachusetts,

¹² William Bagnall, *The Textile Industries of the United States, Including Sketches and Notices of Cotton, Woolen, Silk, and Linen Manufactures in the Colonial Period* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971), I, 325-26; Victor Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1929), I, 549; and Gary Lawson Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation, 1789-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 55.

Baltimore's enterprises were relatively modest in size, specialized in particular products, and employed a more balanced workforce of men and women. Baltimore's largest factories were also state-chartered corporations financed by merchant subscriptions, rather than patriarchal businesses dominated by individual merchant families. Although quite different from the more celebrated New England enterprises, Baltimore's cotton mills were typical of early American textile industrialization in the mid-Atlantic. Throughout Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York, smaller, specialized mills and somewhat larger, state-chartered companies employing a more gender-balanced workforce were common.¹³

Mechanization proved vital to the growth of several industries, but the overall importance of technological improvement in early American industrialization can be easily exaggerated. Historian Jeanne Boydston has pointed out that "large factories and extensive mechanization were not the hallmarks of early industrialization" in the United

¹³ The clear divergence between mid-Atlantic and New England patterns of industrialization during the early nineteenth century continued until the Civil War. As late as 1850, women still outnumbered men in both cotton and wool mills throughout New England by two or three to one. In mid-Atlantic states, women barely outnumbered men in cotton mills, and men significantly outnumbered women in wool mills. The average number of employees per cotton factory by state ranged as high as two or three-hundred employees in New England, while in the mid-Atlantic, no state recorded an average of more than one-hundred employees per cotton mill. Similar trends appeared for wool mills. For these divergent patterns of industrialization in the mid-Atlantic, see Anthony Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972); Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Cynthia Skelton, *The Mills at Manayunk: Industrialization and Conflict in the Philadelphia Region, 1787-1837* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Lynda Fuller Clendenning, "The Early Textile Industry in Maryland, 1810-1850," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 87 (1992): 251-66.

States, and this was certainly true in Baltimore.¹⁴ Most of the available technologies before 1820 required fast streams to drive water-powered machinery, and these innovations, while important to the growth of the region, could not be widely adopted in a city. Few of the city's handicraft producers achieved notable levels of mechanized production until to the introduction of steam engines into urban factories in the 1820s. Thus almost all of the mechanized operations established in Baltimore before 1820 were located outside the city's limits in the countryside of Baltimore County. According to the 1810 manufacturing census, Baltimore City contained twenty-four different industries which manufactured products worth \$1,890,300, but none "should really be classified as a factory-production industry; they var[ied] more in relation to the degree of skill involved in each process than they [did] by the level of rationalized and mechanized production."¹⁵ As in the late eighteenth century, the substitution of mechanical devices for laborers was not a important distinction between artisans and manufacturers in the early nineteenth century. Both groups were largely comprised of handicraft producers.

It may be difficult in the early twenty-first century to imagine a manufacturer as a handicraft producer who employed a mix of free and unfree workers. Today, the word *manufacturing* conjures images of immense, mechanized factories filled with scores of wage earners. Certainly when comparing Henry Ford's Red River automobile plant to an early handicraft manufactory, it is tempting to fold all handicraft producers into one

¹⁴ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 58. Also see Jonathan Prude, "Capitalism, Industrialization, and the Factory in Post-Revolutionary America," in Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence*, 81-100, and Stott, "Artisans and Capitalist Development," 104.

¹⁵ Tench Coxe, *A Statement of the Arts and Manufacturers of the United States of America, for the Year 1810* (Philadelphia: A. Cornman, Jr., 1814), and Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation*, 57.

omnibus occupational category and set them apart from the owners of mechanized factories. For studies of the early nineteenth century, however, it is important to make the distinction between manufacturers and artisans, even though nearly all members of each group were handicraft producers. The close association between the words *mechanization* and *manufacturing* developed later in the nineteenth century. Andrew Ure, a political economist writing in the 1830s, noted that “manufacture is a word, which, in the vicissitude of language, has come to signify the reverse of its intrinsic meaning.” Instead of referring to handicraft production, the word *manufacture* “now denotes every extensive product of art, which is made by machinery, with little or no aid of the human hand; so that the most perfect manufacture is that which dispenses entirely with manual labour.” Unmechanized manufactories represented “imperfect” examples of industrialization according to Ure, but he still placed them in the same category with other manufacturers who benefited from mechanized production.¹⁶

Blending the meanings of the words *mechanization* and *manufacturing* before the mid-nineteenth century veils the complex historical transition which began in the waning

¹⁶ Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures, Or, An Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain* (London: Charles Knight, 1835), 1. Frederick Engels's outline of the industrial revolution, which emphasized the substitution of technology for handicraft production, provided the earliest rationale for ignoring differences between handicraft producers. In the twentieth century, David Landes's influential definition of the industrial revolution renewed the emphasis on the substitution of mechanical devices and inanimate power for human labor. See Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, trans. Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Moscow (Chicago, 1984; orig. Leipzig, 1844), 37, 42, and David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1. More recently, historians of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe have challenged the notion of substitution as untenable, and have questioned whether or not mechanization was the central theme of the Industrial Revolution, at least prior to 1850. See especially Raphael Samuel, “Mechanization and Hand Labour in Industrializing Britain,” and Christopher Johnson, “Patterns of Proletarianization,” in Lenard Berlanstein, ed., *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 26–43, 81–101.

years of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth century. It ignores the real differences between artisans and manufacturers, and creates the myth that artisans maintained a middling status throughout a pre-industrial Jeffersonian period, losing their sense of identity and occupational integrity during an industrializing Jacksonian era. With the distinction between artisans and manufacturers blurred, one scholar concluded that “social historians,” who “look for change instinctively . . . would be disappointed with early national Baltimore, whose social structure budged hardly at all.”¹⁷ That large-scale mechanization fundamentally altered the workplace in the later nineteenth century is undeniable, but a focus on technological differences between early and later nineteenth-century production encourages the classification of all non-mechanized workplaces as pre-industrial and non-factory. As Jonathan Prude has argued, such restrictive nomenclature ignores the heterogeneity of manufacturing in the early republic, and ignores the real socio-economic changes that transformed the handicraft trades in the early nineteenth century. Extensive mechanization may have provided the most efficient way for prospective manufacturers to achieve greater production and productivity, but it proved the least frequent way too.¹⁸

In the absence of wide-scale mechanization, the real difference between traditional artisans and manufacturers was how each group envisioned the division of labor and the social organization of the workplace. Manufacturers ceased to look upon their workers, whether free or unfree, as part of a family or household operation, and tried

¹⁷ Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 12.

¹⁸ Prude, “Capitalism, Industrialization, and the Factory,” 81-100, and Boydston, *Home and Work*, 58, 100.

through various means to squeeze as much labor from them as possible. Few summarily discontinued the use of apprentices or enslaved workers in favor of wage laborers, and instead invented new ways of minimizing the costs associated with existing workers to maximize productivity and profits. Customary rights and traditional relationships between masters and workers were demolished, crippling the deferential bonds within the workplace—one of the hallmarks of the household economy.

Political economists in the early nineteenth century were the first to note the importance of the division of labor in the transition from workshop to manufactory. In his discussion of economic value, David Ricardo addressed the relative importance of “fixed and circulating capitals” of equal and unequal proportions in determining labor and production costs. Fixed capital referred to any capital of a durable nature; machinery, buildings and equipment are the most common forms. Circulating capital referred to any capital that requires rapid reproduction; investment in labor is the most common form. This may seem a rigid division, but Ricardo went to great length to demonstrate that the division is “not essential . . . the line of demarcation cannot be accurately drawn,” and that the effects of different proportions of fixed and circulating capital varied considerably from trade to trade. Ricardo favored mechanization, but warned that the key to greater productivity was not always to sink as much capital as possible into machinery. Fixed capital that is “not of a durable nature . . . [and] will require a great quantity of labour annually to keep it in its original state of efficiency” would increase the cost of production, and thus the relative cost of labor, rather than decrease it. The division of labor, rather than a particular balance between fixed and

circulating capital, was the real key to greater productivity.¹⁹

In 1835, Charles Babbage, a professor of mathematics at Cambridge University with an interest in the economies of machinery and manufacturing, cautioned prospective manufacturers on the limitations of mechanization. The principal difference between *making* and *manufacturing* was that “the former refers to the production a *small*, that latter to that of a *very large number of individuals*.” Compared to the division of labor, technological considerations were of relatively minor consequence in manufactories. Machinery may help achieve greater levels of production, but Babbage cautioned that if a *maker* wished to become a *manufacturer*, “he must attend to other principles besides those mechanical ones,” and focus on the division of labor came first. Those who blindly adopt machinery may find themselves in dire straits, for in Babbage’s estimation, “there is . . . no trade or profession existing in which there is so much quackery, so much ignorance of scientific principles . . . as is to be met with amongst mechanical projectors.” Although the word *manufacturer* was increasingly defined by mechanized production, the division of labor rather than the degree of technology is what separated manufacturers from artisans as late as the 1830s.²⁰

Just as Ricardo and Babbage cautioned prospective manufacturers against blindly adopting machinery, a prospective manufacturer also needed to be very careful about simply adding laborers to a workforce. Unskilled workers proved ineffective in most trades until workshops either attained larger economies of scale, or effectively

¹⁹ David Ricardo, *The Principles of Economy and Taxation* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1911; reissued 1992; orig. 1817), 18-24.

²⁰ Charles Babbage, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1963; orig. 1835), 120-121, 267.

incorporated mechanized production. Only skilled workers could provide the immediate productivity increases that most handicraft producers needed to compete for the backcountry trade. Consequently, the percentage of slaveholders among handicraft producers increased from 14 to 19 percent between 1800 and 1810, and the average annual number of apprentices registered with the Orphans Court increased by 250 percent. Yet the number of available skilled workers ultimately proved insufficient to meet the needs of an expanding urban economy, and many handicraft producers were forced to supplement their workforces with greater numbers of unskilled wage earners. The number of unskilled workers in Baltimore surged in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, but they still remained a minority of the city's laboring population as late as 1820.²¹

Even when handicraft producers were able to limit the pool of potential laborers to skilled workers, they still had to be careful about what types of workers to hire. Choosing the right workers for a given trade proved a tricky business. Short-term versus long-term prospects, available capital for expanding a workforce, seasonal demands of a business, and the need for specific skills all figured into the decision process. No one form of labor proved satisfactory in meeting the needs of every handicraft producer because the varied work regimens in each trade altered which form of labor proved most beneficial. handicraft producers interested in expanding their workshops into manufactories thus faced a labor quandary where the decision to hire or purchase

²¹ T. Stephen Whitman, *Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 169 (Appendix A); Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 31 (Table 11); and Seth Rockman, "Working for Wages in Early Republic Baltimore: Unskilled Labor and the Blurring of Slavery and Freedom" (Ph.D., University of California, Davis, 1999), 8-15.

additional apprentices, journeymen, life slaves, term slaves, hired slaves, or white or free Black wage earners was no longer a certain issue.²²

The manufacturers' propensity to use unfree labor may present as unsettling interpretive problem for some scholars. Traditional marxist interpretations describe a close association between the market economy and the dominance of free labor; slavery and other forms of unfree labor belong to earlier historical epochs and are anathema to the capitalist mode of production.²³ As Eric Foner and Jonathan Glickstein have asserted, however, early nineteenth-century Americans "employed a variety of criteria in setting forth their concepts of truly free manual labor." Although anti-slavery rhetoric eventually suffused free labor ideology, the dichotomous relationship between slavery and free labor only emerged in the 1850s as a response to the "wage slavery" critique of northern factories. Most proponents of "free labor" in the early nineteenth century were "strongly tolerant and protective of chattel slavery."²⁴ The seeming contradiction rested

²² The expression "life slaves" refers to enslaved persons without a legal guarantee or a verbal commitment from their slaveholders to manumission. The expression "term slaves" refers to enslaved persons with either a verbal commitment from their slaveholders, or a written, legal guarantee of manumission upon reaching a specified age. For a discussion of "term slavery" see Christopher Phillips, "The Roots of Quasi-Freedom: Manumission and Term Slavery in Early National Baltimore," *Southern Studies*, 4 (1993): 39-66.

²³ Many marxists now reject a determinist reading of history where society inevitably evolves through set stages of development. Marx himself disclaimed the importance of determinism in a draft letter to the editor of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* in November 1877. Nevertheless, the idea that different modes of production dominate different epochs of history remains an important tradition in marxist thought. In the modern era, capitalism emerged as a mode of production characterized, in part, by "a market where LABOUR POWER is bought and sold, the mode of exchange being money wages for a period of time (time rate) or for a specified task (piece rate); the existence of a market with the implied contractual relation contrasts with earlier phases of slavery or serfdom [unfree labor]." See Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 64, 335, 458-460.

²⁴ Eric Foner, "Free Labor and Nineteenth-Century Political Ideology," in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 99-127, and Jonathan Glickstein, *Concepts of Free Labor in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale

on the centuries-old Western division between manual and mental labor which attached a considerable stigma to the latter while uplifting the virtues of the former. Instead of dividing labor between free and unfree, early nineteenth-century Americans envisioned all unskilled laborers in a broader intellectual category, believing that some form of coercion was necessary to compel people to do degrading manual labor. Early manufacturers thus continued to employ enslaved and apprenticed workers in an emerging market economy without any sense of contradiction.²⁵

Whether using free or unfree workers, manufacturers struggled to discover which forms of labor best suited their needs in the new economy. Within each trade, those who used different forms of labor did not fare equally well. Producers often switched between different types of labor in desperate, sometimes panicked attempts to increase their workshops' productivity. As uncertainty clouded these decisions, most types of laborers vied for employment in nearly every handicraft industry well into the early 1820s. In 1805, William McCleary, a shoemaker, placed an ad in the *Baltimore American* offering employment to five or six of journeymen. He then switched to apprenticed labor within a few months, eventually taking on fourteen apprentices. Between 1808 and 1815, the Union Manufacturing Company bound out more than 60 apprentices, and then switched to employing wage earning girls. By 1820, wage earning girls outnumbered apprenticed boys by a margin of 104 to 16. At the Maryland Chemical Works, David McKim

University Press, 1991), 2, 12.

²⁵ For the often uneven impact of markets, technology, and industrial change upon both labor and handicraft production, see Raphael Samuel, "Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain," *History Workshop*, 3 (1977): 27-32; Michael Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 35-43; and Charles Sabel and Theodore Zeitlin, "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets, and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Industrialization," *Past and Present*, 108 (1985): 133-76.

reduced the number of enslaved laborers from 42 percent of his workforce in 1827 to just 18 percent in 1832.²⁶

A wrong choice of labor could produce a substantial increase in labor costs and wipe out the additional revenues created by expanding production with a larger workforce. Prospective manufacturers who invested in and then exploited the right forms of labor prospered. Those who invested poorly, or chose not to invest in labor at all, soon found themselves struggling to maintain ownership of their shops. What form of labor yielded the highest productivity at the lowest cost thus became the benchmark decision around which entrepreneurs either succeeded or failed in the two decades after the Panic of 1797.

UNFREE LABOR AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

After the Panic of 1797 and the hard times that followed, the patterns of apprenticeship in Baltimore shifted abruptly. Despite the attempt by the Maryland assembly in 1793 to uphold customary practices and provide greater order to apprenticeship, masters in several Baltimore trades began misusing the apprentice system by treating their charges as if they were hired hands. Maryland lawmakers intended the apprenticeship system to provide gainful employment for orphans, but this was only part of a larger social agenda. Baltimore's system was supposed to bolster the city's traditional social order, promote social deference, and strengthen the household economy. Instead, handicraft producers interested in market production transformed the Baltimore County Orphans Court into a distribution center for cheap, bound labor. As early as

²⁶ *Baltimore American*, April 6 and August 16, 1805; Steffen, *Mechanics of Baltimore*, 35; and Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 42, 187 n.82-83.

1799, journeymen complained that master tailors lived “in a state of luxury equal to men of the first rank,” building palatial homes and dabbling in commercial matters by exploiting their apprentices. Meanwhile, the journeymen struggled to survive, many of them “almost deprived of eye sight,” and in all cases their “constitution impaired” with little prospect of things ever improving.²⁷

In many trades, the number of apprentices per workshop was steeply on the rise. For example, three-quarters of Baltimore’s shoe makers who chose to use apprentice labor employed only one or two in their shops, but one-third of all apprentices in the shoemaking trade worked in sweatshops with at least five laborers. Manufacturers who employed six, twelve, or twenty apprentices at a time gave little attention to them beyond their productive use. It is unlikely that the Maryland Assembly intended these changes to the apprenticeship system. As Charles Steffen observed, these practices “were cutting the heart out of the apprenticeship system while preserving its familiar form.” Thereafter, apprenticeship distorted, rather than reflected traditional familial production, stretching the idea of a “household” economy to the breaking point. With almost 2,000 apprentices employed at any given time between 1800 and 1820 in all Baltimore trades, the former benchmark of the household economy became a critical institution in the transition to a capitalist social order.²⁸

William McCleary, one of Baltimore’s most prolific shoe makers, typified how many manufacturers undermined the apprenticeship system. Soon after opening his business at the corner of Water and South Streets in 1805, McCleary registered only three

²⁷ *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser*, June 8, 1799. For the 1793 law regulating apprenticeship, see the discussion in chapter four.

²⁸ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 29-32.

apprentices with the Orphans Court. Within a year, he concluded that he would not be able to compete against other shoemakers for the backcountry trade and subsequently added eleven more apprentices over the next decade. Other shoe makers repeated this pattern throughout the city. William Duncan had as many as fifteen apprentices, and a half-dozen other shoemakers employed at least ten apprentices at any given time. Prospective shoe manufacturers like McCleary and Duncan were not very numerous, but their influence over laborers in the shoe trade and the production of shoes was nonetheless profound. For at least a few of them, the strategy worked.²⁹

Given the increased focus on limiting costs while expanding production, the popularity of apprentice labor is easily understood. Children under the age of sixteen still comprised about 40 percent of the city's population as late as 1820, and thus represented the most ready form of labor in the city. Apprentices were also the least expensive form of labor in the short-term, and were therefore an attractive alternative to almost any handicraft producer. Not surprisingly, apprentices could be found working in almost every Baltimore trade into the early 1820s.³⁰ Despite the short-term benefits in the cost of labor, however, the use of apprentice labor also presented severe drawbacks. In the long-term, apprentices were arguably the most expensive form of labor—especially if the opportunity costs involved with guardianship are taken into consideration. Even more than enslaved workers, apprentices were the least flexible form of labor in the early republic. Once registered with the Orphans Court, apprentices could only be legally discharged from their masters if the Court released both parties from their contractual

²⁹ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 32-36.

³⁰ Third Census of the United States: Population, Baltimore City, 1820, and Third Census of the United States: Manufactures, Maryland, 1820, both at National Archives.

arrangement. This invariably proved a messy process. Masters occasionally lodged protests with the Orphans Court claiming that an apprentice's bad behavior represented a clear violation of contractual obligations. In the case of Thomas Kelly, the Court agreed with him that his apprentice was indeed "a very incorrigible boy," and released Kelly from his obligation.³¹ More often, apprentices lodged protests with the Court alleging physical abuse by their masters. In the vast majority of these cases, the Court ruled in favor of the apprentices and released them from their masters' custody. The Court usually placed these unfortunates with another handicraft producer in the same trade as their former master.

Due to the long-term drawbacks associated with employing them, additional apprentices did not always represent the most effective way for handicraft producers to increase their workforce. Many handicraft producers continued to favor apprentice labor, but an important juxtaposition of interests needed to occur for increased numbers of apprentices to be represent the best way to convert from household to market production. In a few trades, such as shoe manufacture or cabinetmaking, apprentices could be trained to work on particular tasks within the productive process where each step required relatively little skill. Handicraft producers who produced goods in steady demand with backcountry consumers, such as shoes and clothing, needed to increase their labor forces as quickly as possible. The number of apprentices in the clothing trades increased from fewer than 100 registered per year with the Orphans Court between 1794 and 1800 to more than 300 per year between 1811 and 1815. Apprentices registered to shoemakers

³¹ Petition Docket, July 1809 session, Criminal Dockets of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, Baltimore City Criminal Court, Maryland Hall of Records, quoted in Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 29.

increased by 250 percent over the same period. Those engaged in businesses that supported the backcountry trade, such as coopers and wagon makers, also needed to expand production. The number of apprentices bound out to these trades substantially increased as well.³²

In trades requiring more highly skilled workers where the division of labor could not be as easily accommodated, such as bookbinding and clock manufacture, apprentices were less highly concentrated. Unless a handicraft producer in one of these industries could find an apprentice who already possessed some training, a new apprentice represented a questionable investment. Unless they could be trained quickly, apprentices would be ineffective in helping the workshop achieve greater levels of production in the short-term. In these cases, apprentices did not represent the best alternative for converting to market production, and those engaged in these trades did not invest as heavily in apprentice labor. In trades where the backcountry trade either proved relatively unimportant, such as construction and brickmaking, the demand for apprentices was also not as great. The number of apprentices registered per year between 1811 and 1815 in the construction trades had only risen by 8 percent compared since the turn of the century.³³ Those who chose to employ apprentices in these trades likely did so because their limited capital excluded the possibilities of either buying enslaved workers or paying wages to free laborers.

When employing additional apprentices represented a poor choice of labor alternatives for increasing productivity, a prospective manufacturer could turn to either

³² Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 31 (Table 11).

³³ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 31 (Table 11).

enslaved laborers or wage earners. This presumes, of course, that slavery represented a viable labor alternative in an urban economy—an assumption that several historians have dismissed. Many historians have argued that slavery proved either too expensive for profit-minded urban entrepreneurs with easy access to an ever-expanding population of immigrants, or that the urban slaveholder's ambiguous control over his laborers created excessive absenteeism and an unacceptable number of runaways. These problems, supposedly unique to slavery, raised the cost of employing enslaved workers, making the institution untenable in cities. Other studies have suggested that slavery stunted technological innovation, and by extension, the productivity gains that manufacturers needed to compete in a market economy. This impediment created unacceptable opportunity costs for manufacturers, rendering slavery untenable for any manufacturing enterprise—urban or rural.³⁴ The implication of all of these studies is clear: Baltimore's handicraft producers did not face hard choices regarding labor in the early republic; they only needed to choose between apprentices and wage earners because enslaved labor was

³⁴ Richard Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 143-243; Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1967), 221-40; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 40-62; Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 94-102; Robert Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 107-111; and Charles Dew, "Slavery and Technology in the Antebellum Southern Iron Industry: The Case of the Buffalo Forge," in Ronald Numbers and Todd Savitt, ed., *Science and Medicine in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 107-26. Fogel and Engerman stressed that urban slavery declined in Southern cities that had the largest in-migration of white immigrants, but emphasized the importance of rural demand in the later antebellum period as another reason for urban slavery's decline. Slave labor became increasingly expensive because "cities had to compete with the countryside for a supply of slaves whose growth was limited to the rate of natural increase." This made rural demand for slaves relatively "inelastic," while urban demand proved relatively "elastic" in the presence of an acceptable alternative. Ultimately, however, slave labor could not compete with inexpensive immigrant wage labor in antebellum Southern cities. See Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 102, and Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 108.

never a real option.

A plethora of studies have dismantled the notion that enslaved labor could not be profitable in cities or manufacturing enterprises.³⁵ T. Stephen Whitman's analysis of David and Richard McKim's Maryland Chemical Works outside Baltimore is especially instructive. Using the McKims' meticulously detailed records, Whitman demonstrated that the cost of employing wage laborers often exceeded the cost of using either hired slaves, term slaves, or life slaves at the Chemical Works. Absentee rates were similar for enslaved and wage laborers, and even when enslaved workers died suddenly or ran away, which they did with some frequency, the cost of employing wage laborers could still be greater. Whitman also showed that "investment in advanced factory technology and production setting may have been necessary in order to make slave labor profitable" at the Chemical Works. Considerable investment may have been needed to render slavery profitable, because "only heavy capital expenditures could ensure . . . full-time operations." If the Works "had been forced to shut down from time to time," enslaved labor "would have become less attractive." Instead of stunting technological change, slavery may have encouraged David and Richard McKim to embrace it. Although Whitman's study of the McKims' Chemical Works is limited in scope, detailing the experience of only one business owner, the evidence undeniably proves that historians can no longer make categorical statements regarding the relative costs of wage and

³⁵ See especially Robert Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Claudia Dale Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, *A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 157-63; and Midori Takagi, "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": *Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 16-37, 71-96.

enslaved labor.³⁶

The demand for skilled labor helped boost the city's enslaved population and increased the number of slaveholding artisans and manufacturers. The percentage of handicraft producers who held enslaved workers rose from 33 to 35 percent between 1800 and 1810, and the percentage of the enslaved population held by them increased from 23 to 33 percent over the same period. Handicraft producers also directly accounted for one-third of the net increase in Baltimore's enslaved population between 1800 and 1810.³⁷ Merchants and professionals continued to represent the majority of the city's

³⁶ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 39, 53-57. Using the McKims' meticulous records, Whitman calculated the cost for various forms of labor at the Maryland Chemical Works in 1828 and 1829. In 1828, a wage laborer cost \$4.50 per week, which yields a per annum cost of \$234. A hired slave, on the other hand, cost \$159.42 per year, a term slave cost \$138.12 per year, and a life slave only cost \$136.12 per year. Although two runaway slaves and the death of another made the cost of life slaves and hired slaves rise dramatically in 1829, wage labor still remained a more expensive alternative. In 1829, hired slaves cost \$209.42 per year and life slaves cost \$206.12. Other studies have clearly demonstrated that slaveholders often embraced technological change. See Joyce Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

³⁷ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 12, and Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 20. Without the chattel records for Baltimore, the artisans' contribution to the net increase in the city's enslaved population must be estimated using census records and the city directories. Whitman used name matching to identify the occupations of 645 of 991 slaveholders in the 1800 census. Of these, 210 worked in handicraft trades and held 522 enslaved people. Other occupations, mostly merchants and professionals, accounted for 435 slaveholders who held 1,357 enslaved people. Thus, artisans and manufacturers held 27.8 percent of the enslaved population for whom the occupations of the slaveholders can be identified in the 1800 census. For the 1810 census, Whitman identified the occupations of 325 slaveholders who worked in handicraft trades and held 776 enslaved people. Other occupations, mostly merchants and professionals, accounted for 612 slaveholders who held 1,792 enslaved people. Thus, artisans and manufacturers held 30.2 percent of the enslaved population for whom the occupations of the slaveholders can be identified in the 1810 census. (See Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 179 n.11.) By extrapolation, if the percentage of Baltimore's enslaved population held by handicraft producers in 1800 was 27.7 percent, this amounted to approximately 790 of the 2,843 enslaved people actually listed in the census for Baltimore City. If the percentage of Baltimore's enslaved population held by handicraft producers in 1810 rose to 30.2 percent, this amounted to approximately 1,411 of the 4,672 enslaved people actually listed in the 1810 census. Thus, the net increase between 1800 and 1810 in the number of enslaved people held by Baltimore artisans and manufacturers may be estimated at 621, or 34 percent of the actual net increase of 1,829 for the city's enslaved population overall. The need for industrial labor thus directly accounted for over one-third of

slaveholders, but this is not necessarily an indication that the majority of Baltimore's enslaved population worked outside the handicraft trades. James Price, a merchant and the city's largest slaveholders in 1798, owned twenty-eight slaves, including sixteen enslaved men. Instead of employing all these workers himself, Price and other significant slaveholders likely hired them out. Slave hiring in Baltimore may not have been as extensive a practice as in many antebellum Southern cities, but it had become prevalent enough in the city by 1813 that Alexander Stuart and Jacob G. Smith ran slave-hiring employment agencies. Detailed records for these agencies do not exist, and without further documentation it is impossible to know with any precision what percentage of enslaved workers held by merchants and professionals were actually hired out to work in the handicraft trades. What can be concluded is that if artisans and manufacturers employed only one-third of the nearly 3,000 enslaved people held by merchants and professionals in 1810, then the majority of the city's enslaved population would have been at work in artisans' shops and other manufacturing enterprises.³⁸

Women represented the majority of Baltimore's enslaved population, and this

slavery's expansion in Baltimore between 1800 and 1810.

³⁸ Federal Direct Tax of 1798, Baltimore City, MS.806, MHS (hereafter referred to as 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax), and *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1800), hereafter referred to as the 1800 Baltimore City Directory. Christopher Phillips casts doubt on the extensiveness of slave hiring for industrial purposes, and Claudia Dale Goldin observed that Baltimore possessed the lowest rates of slave hiring of any city within the slave states. Nevertheless, T. Steven Whitman identified 70 slaveholders in the 1813 tax records whose unusual number of slaves "made them plausible candidates to have engaged in slave hiring," and both Alexander Stuart's and Jacob G. Smith's agencies proved quite successful. According to T. Stephen Whitman, artisans and manufacturers held 33 percent of the city's enslaved population in 1810, while merchants and professionals held over 60 percent. If one-third of the enslaved people in the latter category were hired out, and in this way "added" to those in the former category, it would amount to a majority of the city's enslaved population. See Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 25; Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American South*, 8-10; and Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 12, 14-15.

demographic has encouraged the idea that slavery's expansion in Baltimore owed more to the demand for black servants as symbols of wealth than a need for industrial laborers. If a real need had existed in the handicraft trades for enslaved labor, so the argument goes, then enslaved men should have outnumbered enslaved women. This interpretation overstates the case in two ways. First, if status display represented the major reason for the expansion of urban slavery, then slaveholding ought to have been skewed significantly toward relatively wealthy people. T. Stephen Whitman's assessment of the 1813 city tax records proved otherwise. At least one out of every eight people in every decile of taxable wealth held at least one slave. That slaveholding proved a relatively common practice suggests that slaveholding was a fairly ineffective sign of status and urban affluence. Furthermore, the observation that women constituted the majority of Baltimore's enslaved population is not an indication that wealthy urbanites looking for domestic laborers created most of the demand for enslaved workers. Not all enslaved women toiled as laundresses, cooks, and domestic servants; a substantial number worked in the trades, especially in tobacco manufacturing, bakeries, and cloth production.³⁹

Studies of slavery's long-term profitability and influence upon technology are important in demonstrating the peculiar institution's viability in cities and manufacturing, and have contributed substantially to our understanding of slavery. Yet the scholarly exchange on this subject sometimes misses the point for Baltimore's handicraft producers. From the perspective of a prospective manufacturer seeking to rapidly

³⁹ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 18, 168. Christopher Phillips discovered a parity between the sexes in the 1804 Baltimore tax assessment, the bills of sale and declarations registered in Baltimore for 1787-1830, and the declarations of slaves brought to Baltimore for 1797-1830. He then argued that "this parity suggests that slavery in Baltimore was never predominantly industrial in character," while "the size and gender patterns of slaveholding in Baltimore suggest that most homeowners acquired slaves for household chores." See Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 20.

convert from household to market production, questions of any kind concerning the long-term represented secondary concerns. The short-term need to quickly expand production without significantly increasing labor costs vexed almost every handicraft producer struggling to remain independent. Whether or not enslaved laborers could immediately accomplish these goals better than apprentices or wage earners was the only criteria upon which decisions were made regarding the future of a workforce.

Fortunately for Baltimore entrepreneurs interested in acquiring enslaved workers, the increased demand in the city conveniently dovetailed with slavery's increasing weakness in much of the rural Chesapeake. When the French tobacco market collapsed in 1793, many farmers in Maryland and northern Virginia switched to wheat cultivation. Although wheat did not require as many year-round workers as tobacco, historian Lorena Walsh observed that many planters did not immediately reduce their labor force. The shortage of strong draft animals in the Chesapeake complicated the switch to grain production on Maryland's Western Shore, requiring planters to initially rely upon enslaved labor for ploughing during the 1790s. Many planters needed to dedicate more land to pasture and hay, and learn how to grow forage. "Once they could count on animal power," however, "planters needed fewer hoe hands" and pared down their labor force.⁴⁰

The brief delay between the collapse of the tobacco market and the reduction of the rural enslaved population brought the needs of the countryside into perfect

⁴⁰ Lorena Walsh, "Rural African Americans in the Constitutional Era in Maryland, 1776-1810," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 84 (1989): 338. Also see Edward Papenfuss, "Planter Behavior and Economic Opportunity in a Staple Economy," *Agricultural History*, 46 (1972): 297-311, and Lorena Walsh, "Land, Landlord, and Leaseholder: Estate Management and Tenant Fortunes in Southern Maryland, 1642-1820," *Agricultural History*, 59 (1985): 373-96.

juxtaposition with the needs of the city. Northern Maryland planters proved very willing to sell their chattels after 1800, and unlike the 1790s, when in-migration by slaveholders from the Caribbean, Virginia, and the Middle States accounted for a substantial part of the net increase of Baltimore's enslaved population, the city's handicraft producers actively recruited skilled enslaved laborers from the countryside. The ample supply helped keep prices relatively low prior to 1810. For "term slaves," a boy of 15-19 years cost \$193, and a young man of 20-29 only \$236. Prices on those enslaved "for life" ran much higher, but remained just within the reach of much of the artisan community prior to the 1810s.⁴¹ These circumstances made acquiring enslaved workers inexpensive enough to immediately and effectively compete against other forms of labor.

Notices consistently appeared after 1800 in Baltimore newspapers advertising rural slaves for sale due to a lack of employment for them in the countryside. One planter placed an ad for "AN ACTIVE NEGRO BOY, about thirteen years of age. Sold for no fault but want of employment." Another planter advertised for sale "A Likely Negro Man, of good character-sold for want of employment." Buyers in the city willingly responded, and Baltimoreans ultimately purchased eight times as many rural slaves as they sold to rural areas. The forced migration of enslaved African Americans to the city had effectively drained the Maryland countryside of skilled laborers by the War of 1812. Baltimore City accounted for almost half the net increase in Maryland's enslaved population between 1800 and 1810, and when Charles County and the city are excluded from the Maryland totals, the rest of the state actually experienced a net loss in its

⁴¹ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 175.

enslaved population of more than 900 people.⁴²

Baltimore artisans and manufacturers who favored enslaved labor believed that enslaved workers provided stability in their workforce. Wage earners frustrated handicraft producers with constant turnover and their reluctance to work overtime (usually at the same rate as regular pay). Apprentices were little better, typically demanding that their masters observe the customary practices barring forced overtime. On the other hand, enslaved laborers usually leapt at the opportunity to work “extras,” either to earn cash or be awarded additional free time. This difference existed largely because “extras” held out the chance for enslaved workers to build up savings that could eventually be used to buy oneself out of slavery.⁴³

Many handicraft producers also believed that enslaved workers, unlike wage earners or apprentices, could be used continuously over long periods of time. Racist theories concerning the innate ability of African Americans to perform hard labor over extended periods strengthened this idea. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson commented that African Americans appeared to tolerate heat better than whites, and “seem to require less sleep. A black, after hard labour through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight, or later,” and still awake

⁴² *Federal Intelligencer*, and *Baltimore Daily Gazette*, April 2, 1800, and *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, September 27, 1804, cited in Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 17. Maryland's enslaved population increased from 107,703 in 1800 to 111,502 in 1810, for a net gain of 3,799 enslaved African Americans. Baltimore's enslaved population increased from 2,843 to 4,672, for a net gain of 1,829, or 48.1 percent of the total net gain for all of Maryland. Charles County experienced a net increase of 2,877 between 1800 and 1810, climbing from 9,558 to 12,435. By excluding Baltimore City and Charles County from the Maryland totals, the remaining counties experienced a net loss of 907 enslaved African Americans between 1800 and 1810. Second Census of the United States: Population, Maryland, 1800, and Third Census of the United States: Population, Maryland, 1810, both at National Archives.

⁴³ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 39-57, and Jacqueline Jones, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 211.

“with the first dawn of the morning.” In an address to the American Philosophical Society in 1787, Samuel Stanhope Smith, President of the College of New Jersey, criticized many of the details of Jefferson’s racial ideas but echoed the basic arguments. In particular, Smith agreed that African Americans seemed to tolerate heat better than whites. He argued that such a physical characteristic “probably arises, in part, from the superior thickness of the skin.” This alleged trait supposedly made African Americans especially well suited to severe physical exertion. Perhaps unwittingly, Jefferson and Smith provided slavery advocates with arguments in defense of the peculiar institution. Although later ethnologists rejected these theories in the mid-nineteenth century, Baltimore’s handicraft producers had absorbed these racist sentiments by the end of the eighteenth century. In a 1798 petition to the Baltimore City Council, Baltimore’s brickmakers claimed that “if any of you gentlemen have been at our brickyard, you have no doubt observed four black Men for one white man . . . because of the extream hard labor.”⁴⁴

Artisans and manufacturers engaged in trades that required laborers to work continuously over sustained periods of time tended to favor enslaved laborers over apprentices or wage earners. Typically, these were trades where the product was both in great demand and possessed a high inelasticity of demand. Producer goods were more likely to fall into this category than finished goods, and thus tanners and curriers proved twice as likely to be slaveholders as cordwainers, shoemakers, and glovers. The same

⁴⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 139, and Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, ed. Winthrop Jordan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 169. The brickmakers’ 1798 petition is cited in Lee Nelson, “Brickmaking in Baltimore, 1798,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 18 (1959): 33-34.

dichotomy held true for brickmakers and bricklayers, as well as ironmakers and blacksmiths. If the capital requirements for the trade were also low, then a relatively high percentage of the trade's practitioners were likely to be slaveholders. This was the case with ship carpenters, where the percentage of slaveholders increased from 23 to 32 percent between 1800 and 1810. In trades where capital requirements were relatively high, however, only the wealthiest practitioners were usually slaveholders. This was the case with blacksmiths, among whom the percentage of slaveholders only increased from 15 to 18 percent between 1800 and 1810.⁴⁵

THE RISE OF THE MANUFACTURERS

Discovering when the transition from artisan to manufacturer occurred is a tricky subject. Barring an extraordinary moment of clarity giving rise to a revelation in a diary or letter, the moment when an individual handicraft producer made the transition is nearly impossible to document. Over time, the absence of familial associations in the urban workplace yielded new understandings between employers and employees. These understandings eventually calcified into observable practices. During the 1820s, for example, David and Richard McKim calculated the cost of each worker in their alum manufactory down to the cent. Although they valued workers able to perform multiple tasks, the McKims did rely on a division of labor, and made nearly month-by-month changes in their workforce based exclusively on their laborers' productivity. They paid no attention to the spiritual condition of their workers, developing their workers' skills, or training their workers to become independent producers themselves. Motivated solely by

⁴⁵ Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 19, 167-169 (Appendix A).

minimizing costs and maximizing profits, all the McKims' labor decisions came down to the bottom line.⁴⁶

The manner in which the McKims handled their workforce demonstrates that they were manufacturers by the 1820s. Unfortunately, it does not establish the point in time when they first breached the boundary between artisan and manufacturer. The McKims' business practices were the culmination of a process which began years before. Yet part of that process was a cultural, rather than an economic one. Changes in the division of labor involved immediate social consequences for the workplace, and an artisan's decision to abandon customary practices was in this way less a business decision than it was a cultural determination—a psychological divide that an individual needed to cross.⁴⁷ To recover that point in time, we can upon cultural signs rather than account books, and one such cultural artifact was the growing prevalence of the term *manufacturer* in city directories. By the 1790s, as historian Laura Rigal has demonstrated, Americans began to attach special meaning to the word as a “quintessentially intermediate” form between artisanal and “fully industrial” production. Americans used the manufactory as a metaphor for the transformation of the republic into both an industrial and a federal union. In parades, portraits, poetry, museums exhibits, and autobiography, Americans explored their own roles in the transformations through “the myriad productive processes

⁴⁶ T. Steven Whitman, “Industrial Slavery at the Margin: The Maryland Chemical Works,” *Journal of Southern History*, 59 (1993): 31-62.

⁴⁷ Many postmodernists have focused considerable attention on the idea that psychological divides, rather than material or political changes, provide a better understanding of change over time, especially between historical periods. These “divides” represent conscious moments of transition giving rise to new understandings of the world and sharply distinctive worldviews. See especially Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 20-47.

of American manufacturing.”⁴⁸ The steadily increasing use of the term *manufacturer* in early nineteenth-century city directories may then be treated as a cultural sign of the urban transition—one capable of tracking the rise of the manufacturing class from its infancy to its maturation.

As with any occupational group, not every manufacturer would have been accounted for in the city directories. Further limiting the number of manufacturers under analysis to those who explicitly described themselves by the term provides an even more conservative estimate of their numbers and growing influence in the early republic. Many handicraft producers who could legitimately be called manufacturers continued to identify themselves by traditional occupational titles, such as “maker” or “smith,” well into the nineteenth century. For example, none of Baltimore’s more significant shipwrights ever identified themselves by the term. The city directories do not contain a single reference to a “ship manufacturer.” Thus, all of the city’s shipwrights fall into the category of traditional artisans according to the above methodology. Yet Joseph Despeaux, the French-born refugee from St. Domingue who operated a ship yard on Fell’s Point, was in no sense a traditional artisan.

Much like the McKims, Joseph Despeaux bought and sold labor as a commodity. He used eight slaves as the base for his workforce throughout most of the 1790s and early 1800s. When he received a large contract, he hired additional enslaved laborers as caulkers, and when his yard was not as busy, he hired out his own enslaved laborers to other shipwrights. By 1812, however, Despeaux was taking full advantage of the division of labor through targeted employment of wage earners. Although whites and

⁴⁸ Laura Rigal, *The American Manufactory: Art, Labor, and the World of Things in the Early Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 12, 17, 21.

African Americans, enslaved and free, continued to work side-by-side in the shipyard, Despeaux did not compensate his workers at the same rates. Skilled white carpenters made approximately \$2.00 per day, free white caulkers made \$1.50 per day, and enslaved caulkers made only \$1.25 per day. An assortment of day laborers, who included women as well as African Americans, enslaved and free, were paid less than \$1.00 per day for unskilled work.⁴⁹

Handicraft producers in nearly all trades hired day laborers and enslaved workers, but the scale, use of, turn-over, and diversity of labor at Despeaux's yard demonstrates an understanding of the division of labor. This distinguishes his operation from those of traditional artisans. Despeaux, and many others who bought and sold labor as a commodity, could thus be deemed manufacturers. Yet excluding him does serve an important purpose. By limiting the manufacturers under analysis to those who explicitly identified themselves by the term in the city directories, it is possible to avoid becoming entangled in a definitional morass over who is, and who is not, a manufacturer. This conservative methodology undoubtedly undercounts the actual number of manufacturers in the city. Yet it also insures that the conclusions reached below, which point to a substantial expansion in the number of manufacturers and their wealth, in both relative and absolute terms, are not exaggerated claims.

In the immediate wake of the Panic of 1797, the success of the new class of manufacturers was not readily apparent. Only 3 percent of the city's handicraft producers identified themselves as manufacturers, and they controlled just 4½ percent of all the taxable property of the city's handicraft producers. This should not be surprising;

⁴⁹ Despeaux Account Book, MS.294, MHS.

Baltimore was still mired in the hard times that followed the Panic of 1797, the idea of expanding the backcountry trade was just beginning to win converts, and none of the transportation, marketing, or financial instruments used to secure that trade were yet implemented. Although some of Baltimore's artisans were probably flirting with the idea of expanding production through a reorganization of labor, few had actually chosen at this point to pursue that path.⁵⁰

The various commercial frustrations following the Panic of 1797 provided the conditions in which the new class of manufacturers flourished. They produced a flood of cheap goods that found ready markets in the burgeoning backcountry retail trade. Yet the continuing importance of the urban market should not be overlooked. Between the Panic of 1797 and the War of 1812, manufacturers also wrested a significant part of Baltimore's local trade away from urban artisans. They accomplished this by selling their products directly to customers, and indirectly, by selling their products to various retailers. The commercial nexus forged between manufacturers and retailers led to a revolution in the distribution of goods within the city. Throughout the eighteenth century, shopkeepers and grocers usually bought and sold farm produce from farmers and imported merchandise from merchants. Artisans produced and sold domestic goods, and provided services typically not available from grocers and shopkeepers, such as repair work. Retailers and artisans thus seldom competed against each other. With the rise of

⁵⁰ 1800 Baltimore City Directory and 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax. Although property tax records only reveal forms of landed wealth, including buildings and livestock, and ignore most forms of mercantile and manufacturing wealth, such as stocks, ownership of vessels and machinery, manufacturers were more likely than artisans to own these other, hidden forms of wealth. It thus seems safe to assume that the disparity in wealth revealed by the property tax records is a conservative statement of the economic differences between the two groups. Thus the schism may have been greater in 1798, but the marginal difference would have been repeated in the 1812 and 1818 tax records as well. Thus the tax on property alone can provide a reasonable basis for

the manufacturers, however, retailers saw an opportunity to increase profits for themselves by challenging the artisans' dominance over the local market. By reselling inexpensive goods produced by manufacturers, they steadily increased their share of the city's local trade at the expense of traditional artisans.

George Littig, a hatter who opened a store on North Gay Street in 1796, was caught in the midst of the urban retailing revolution. Like most eighteenth-century artisans, Littig initially received nearly all his revenues by selling directly to the public from his own shop. Unlike most artisans, Littig lavished considerable personal attention on his customers. Instead of simply entering the customer's name and the amount of a sale, he faithfully recorded the type of hat purchased, for whom it was intended, and what relation that person had to the customer. Littig's richly detailed ledger offers a portrait of a handicraft producer busily engaged in his trade and aware of each patron's needs. He could tell from his ledger which of his patrons bought hats only for family members, and those who were more likely to buy hats as gifts for friends. Littig could thus tailor his production to best fit his customers' needs, and a few of his dedicated customers rewarded his attentiveness by loyally returning to his shop year after year to make all of their headware purchases. Between April 1796 and April 1797, for example, John Osborn, a cordwainer, bought seven hats for five different people, including three hats for himself, and four others for a journeyman, a blacksmith, a friend, and a member of his family. Richard Jones, another loyal customer, returned nine times over three years to buy four hats for himself and eight hats for his sons, Thomas and Richard.⁵¹

comparison between these occupational groups.

⁵¹ George Littig Ledger, MS.1657, MHS.

By early 1797, retailers took notice of Littig's success and began buying his hats for sale in their own stores. Although Littig continued to be attentive to individual shoppers, he thereafter relied upon sales to retailers for most of his business. This proved increasingly true during the troubled years of 1797-1799, as seen in Figure 7-1. Although a few individuals patronized Littig's store in the wake of the Panic, his sales to individuals steadily declined from over £83 in 1796 to £51 in 1798, and amounted to only £21 in 1799. While sales to individuals slid by 75 percent over two years, Littig's sales to retailers fell by only 30 percent. In fact, Littig's sales to retailers actually increased slightly in 1798 and 1799. By the turn of the century, the North Gay Street hatter relied upon sales to retailers for almost 90 percent of his revenues.⁵²

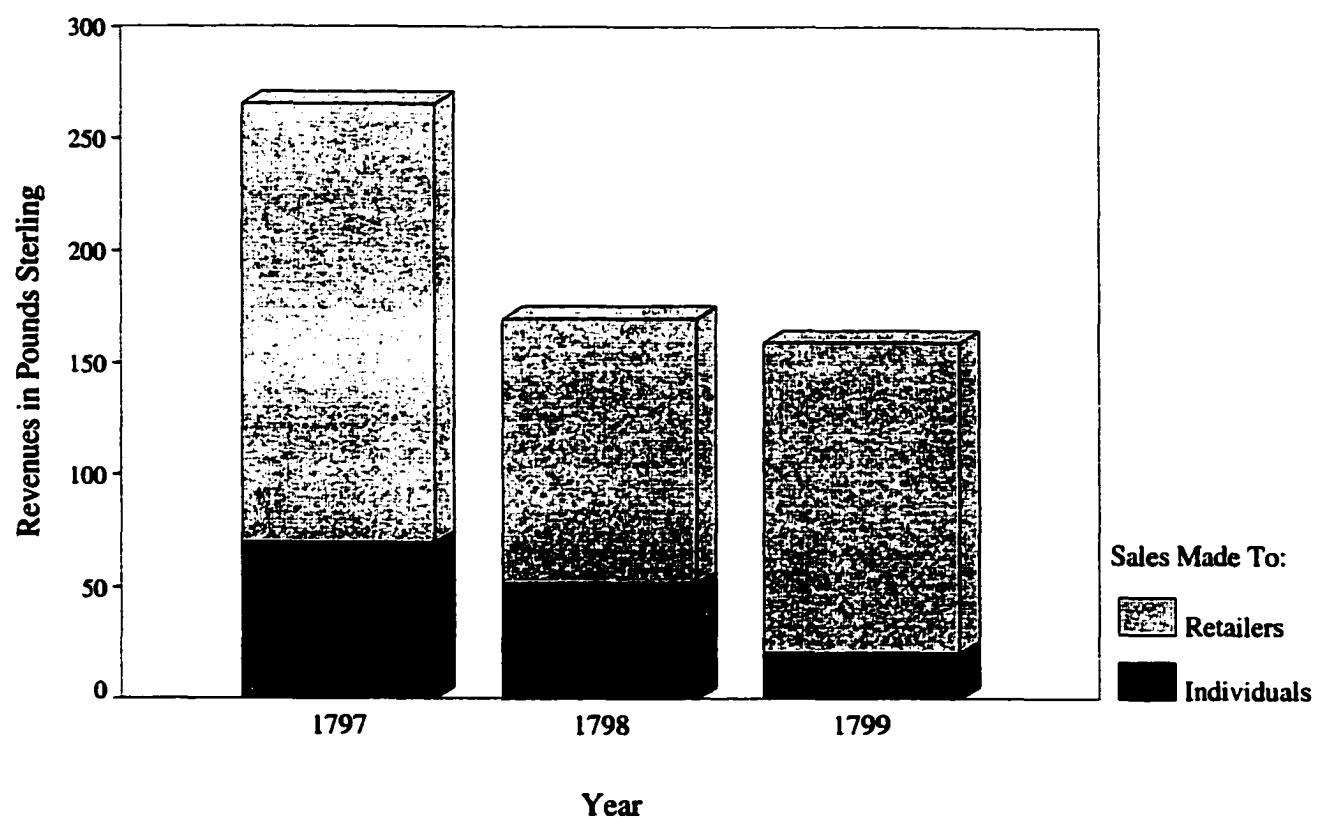
Littig typified the pattern of most handicraft producers after 1800. Steady revenue hinged on the ability to sell to local retailers. Direct sales to the public formed a second, less critical part of a handicraft producer's income. The retailing revolution in the city thus slowly transformed the distribution of goods within Baltimore to favor retailers and manufacturers. Between the expansion of markets in the backcountry and the retailing revolution in the city, manufacturers vaulted from obscurity to prominence in just a few years. The percentage of manufacturers among the city's handicraft producers more than doubled by 1812, and manufacturers possessed, on average, two-and-a-half times the assessed property of traditional artisans. The manufacturers' success also proved enormously beneficial to grocers and shopkeepers, whose property assessments also rose appreciably after 1800.⁵³

⁵² George Littig Ledger, MHS.

⁵³ *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812), hereafter referred to as 1812 Baltimore City Directory, and Baltimore Property Tax Records, 1812, RG.4 #1,

Figure 7-1

Distribution of Revenues at Littig's Store, 1797-1799



Source: George Littig Ledger, MS.1657, Maryland Historical Society.

The vast majority of manufacturers were men, but a few entrepreneurial women identified themselves as manufacturers as well. As early as 1800, a Mrs. Miltenberger appeared in the city directory as the owner of a leather manufactory in Fell's Point. In 1812, there were two manufacturers who could be positively identified as women: Ann Rutledge, who ran a brush manufactory at 80 North Howard Street, and Catherine Paul, who owned an umbrella and oil cloth manufactory at 217 Baltimore Street. By 1819, Paul was still in business, though she had moved to 4 North Liberty Street. The 1819 city directory also listed Mary Ashwell, who ran a comb manufactory at 8 North Gay Street. Baltimore's wealthiest businesswoman was Madame Jeanne de Volunbrunn, the owner of a cigar and snuff manufactory at 35 Harrison Street. In 1818, her property was assessed at \$1,402, twice the city's average, and well within the top 20 percent of all the city's property owners.⁵⁴ She had come to Baltimore by way of New York, where she had been at the epicenter of what historian Shane White has called New York City's first "full-blown black riot." A slaveholder and allegedly the owner of a brothel, Volunbrunn was planning to remove twenty enslaved African Americans from New York City to the South in 1801. Rumors of her plan swirled about New York, rousing the ire of the city's Haitian immigrant community. On one evening, a mob of nearly 250 threatened to destroy Volunbrunn's house and murder all those inside before the city's watch forcibly dispersed the crowd. Volunbrunn left New York and removed to Baltimore, where she

microfilm reel 83, BCA.

⁵⁴ 1800 Baltimore City Directory; 1812 Baltimore City Directory; *The Baltimore Directory, corrected up to June, 1819* (Baltimore: Richard Matchett, 1819), hereafter referred to as 1819 Baltimore City Directory; and Baltimore Property Tax Record, 1818, RG.4 #1, microfilm reel 85, BCA (hereafter referred to as 1818 Baltimore Tax Record).

employed twenty-two enslaved workers in her business.⁵⁵

By 1812, manufacturers were beginning to dominate handicraft production in Baltimore. Although they continued to represent less than 10 percent of the city's total handicraft producers, their average assessed property, as seen in Figure 7-2, was twice the city's mean, and two-and-a-half times that of traditional artisans. The manufacturers' share of the handicraft producers' total assessed property had also rocketed from 4½ to 17 percent between 1798 and 1812. By the Panic of 1819, manufacturers possessed on average three times the assessed property of a traditional artisan. The manufacturers' prominence in the city's handicraft community reflected the eclipse of the artisans as the preeminent group in urban manufacturing, and their growing dominance over Baltimore's industrial future.⁵⁶

A few manufacturers, like cloth producer Abraham Falconer, had even extended their enterprises to include an export trade in American-made goods by the 1810s. After the war with Britain, Falconer maintained a steady correspondence with his brother in the West Indies, confirming and discussing the company's exports from Baltimore to Cuba and Jamaica, as well as New Orleans and Buenos Aires. The Falconers' success paid significant social dividends for the family, as Abraham served as the Grand Master of the Lodge of Baltimore's Corinthian Order of Masons.⁵⁷ Because of the vastly increased wealth and prestige that manufacturers like Falconer possessed, it is appropriate to stop

⁵⁵ Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1981), 144-145; Timothy Gilfoyle, "Strumpets and Misogynists: Brothel 'Riots' and the Transformation of Prostitution in Antebellum New York," *New York History*, 68 (1987): 48-49; and Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 23.

⁵⁶ 1819 Baltimore City Directory and 1818 Baltimore Tax Record.

⁵⁷ Abraham H. Falconer Papers, MS.345 and MS.345.1, volume one, MHS.

Figure 7-2

Traditional Artisans and Manufactures in Baltimore, 1798-1819

	1800			1812			1819		
	N	Assessed Property	% City's Mean	N	Assessed Property	% City's Mean	N	Assessed Property	% City's Mean
Artisans	1,270	\$1,057	95%	871	\$230	67%	1,178	\$491	58%
Manufacturers	43	\$1,449	130%	71	\$584	171%	75	\$1,486	175%

Sources: *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1801); *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812); *The Baltimore Directory, corrected up to June 1819* (Baltimore: Richard Matchett, 1819); Federal Direct Tax, Baltimore City, 1798, MS.807, Maryland Historical Society; Baltimore City Property Tax Records, 1812 and 1818 (microfilm), Baltimore City Archives.

Notes: Of the 1,270 artisans listed in the 1800 city directory, 351 were identified in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax. Of the 43 manufacturers listed in the 1800 city directory, 14 were identified in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax. Of the 871 artisans listed in the 1812 city directory, 178 were identified in the 1812 property tax records. Of the 71 manufacturers listed in the 1812 city directory, 18 were identified in the 1812 property tax records. Every other page of the 1819 Directory was examined. Of the 1,178 artisans drawn from the 1819 city directory, 496 were identified in the 1818 property tax records. Of the 75 manufacturers drawn from the 1819 city directory, 42 were identified in the 1818 property tax records. The city's mean assessed property per capita was \$1,114 in 1798, \$341 in 1812, and \$850 in 1818.

referring to them under the same broad category with traditional artisans. Manufacturers entered a new social category, no longer laboring in workshops or directly managing workers. Their daily routines now involved bookkeeping, investment strategies, marketing schemes, and business deals. They had ceased to be workers in any way and had become part of the city's business elite as fully developed urban professionals. Their political, economic, and cultural interests were no longer those of the artisans, but those of the capitalists.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ For an especially instructive essay on the interests of early capitalists, see Stephen Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production," *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, 6 (1974): 60-112. Marglin argued that most early capitalists made changes in production to ensure greater profits for themselves, rather than to intentionally promote productivity. These admittedly different interests were, however, rather closely interwoven together in practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SHADOWS OF THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

April 10 promised to be a busy day at George Lightner's tinsmith shop. Elijah White stopped in to settle his account for ten dollars, and another customer settled an account for twenty-three dollars and fourteen cents.¹ Of course, neither transaction involved the exchange of goods and services on that day. In much the same way that American artisans had done business for more than a century, Lightner had extended short-term credit to his customers, allowing them to purchase goods and services on account. Transactions like these were common in the eighteenth-century; what made the transaction between Lightner and Elijah White curious is that it took place in 1813. With the expansion of the backcountry trade and the concurrent rise of the manufacturers in the city, one might have assumed that the traditional economy winked out of existence at the turn of the nineteenth century. The daily bustle of activity at George Lightner's shop suggests otherwise.

The persistence of the household economy into the nineteenth century should not be surprising. Unlike political revolutions, where one form of organization can immediately yield to another, economic and social revolutions usually develop over time and typically displace rather than replace previous institutions. As Fernand Braudel observed, "*revolution* in the sense of upheaval or overthrow of an existing society" is not a useful concept in the study of economic and social change unless the idea of revolution also encompasses "the opposite sense meaning *reconstruction*." According to Braudel, "rapid and slow change are inseparable" in social and economic revolutions, "For no

¹ George Lightner Account Book, MS.1173, MHS.

society exists which is not torn between the forces working to preserve it and the subversive forces—whether perceived or not—working to undermine it.” Because short-term economic upheavals and long-term social reconstructions are invariably intertwined, the co-existence of divergent forms of economic organization has been a relatively common occurrence in the long history of capitalism.²

Braudel’s theory finds an easy application in early-nineteenth-century America. The expansion of the backcountry trade embodied the upheaval of the revolutionary process. Newspapers were transformed into tools for backcountry marketing, new turnpikes stretched across the countryside, and manufacturers surged in both numbers and wealth. The slow transformation of Baltimore’s social structure, however, embodied the idea of a long-term social reconstruction. As Braudel warned, explaining the latter presents the more significant challenge for historians because the contours of a long-term social reconstruction are usually murky and may become easily blurred. This was certainly true for Baltimore. George Lightner’s dealings appear little different from the activities of his colonial predecessors, and in almost every Baltimore neighborhood, similar business practices remained a part of everyday life. As late as 1819, traditional artisans accounted for over 90 percent of the city’s handicraft producers and a majority of the city’s working people labored in shops with no more than five workers.³ At first glance, it seems that Baltimore’s social structure was little different than in the colonial period. However, closer inspection of the handicraft community reveals a different story.

² Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, vol. III, *Civilization and Capitalism*. trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 537-538.

³ *The Baltimore Directory, corrected up to June, 1819* (Baltimore: Richard Matchett, 1819), hereafter cited as 1819 Baltimore Directory.

As manufacturers increased production and sold an ever-greater volume of goods to retailers, traditional artisans like George Lightner were being slowly crowded out of the urban market. The total number of artisans in the city remained high, but small shops like Lightner's faced dwindling revenues. To insure the survival of their businesses, traditional artisans were ultimately forced to reduce labor costs, and this altered the relationship between artisans and their laborers in a variety of ways. The social reorganization of the city's workshops had profound implications for the nature of work in the city, the long-term prospects for artisans' shops, and the nature of gender relations within the urban household. By 1819, only the threadbare structures of the traditional eighteenth-century economy still survived. Thus while exchanges like those between Elijah White and George Lightner continued, they represented shadows of the household economy. Like Prospero performing his final magical act in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, such scenes were soon to be lost forever.

TRoubLED WORKSHOPS

The image of the down-trodden artisan is a familiar one in the literature on nineteenth-century America. As Richard Stott observed, "artisan historians [collectively] portray capitalism as having a strongly adverse effect on craftsmen." Their "sympathies are clearly with mechanics" whom they claim were "victimized by the onset of an exploitative, impersonal, market system." This stereotype is worth questioning.⁴

⁴ Richard Stott, "Artisans and Capitalist Development," in Howard Rock, Paul Gilje, and Robert Asher, eds., *American Artisans: Crafting Social Identity, 1750-1850* (Madison: Madison House, 1997), 101-102. Although most artisan historians have traditionally argued that craftsmen struggled against capitalism, they have often disagreed over the nature of the struggle. Marxists and "old labor historians" believe that artisans struggled for materialist reasons against market expansion. Marxist interpretations usually focus more on the plight of factory workers, however.

Certainly there were many artisans who realized that the manufacturers had an advantage in capturing the backcountry trade, but consciously refused to change their own workshops in order to compete. However, other artisans fully embraced and benefited from the new regional market, and it was these artisans who formed the core of the newly emergent manufacturers. There were other divisions in the handicraft community too. Some artisans believed that the expansion of the backcountry trade and the subsequent rise of the manufacturers had little affect on their lives and livelihoods, while others proved unwilling or unable to acknowledge what was happening around them. These varied experiences can not be easily bundled together into a single orderly narrative of exploitation by an impersonal market system. Instead of casting artisans as victims, and thereby removing agency from them, a more productive approach is to ask how artisans confronted the development of manufactories.

As late as 1819, more than half of the city's artisans continued to ply their trades without direct competition from manufacturers. The adoption of the division of labor occurred haphazardly, and manufactories did not emerge in every handicraft industry. The 1800 Baltimore directory cataloged sixteen different types of manufactories that produced, among other products, shoes, combs, tinware, snuff, soap, and candles. Thus shoemakers, combmakers, tinsmiths, tobacconists, and soap and candlemakers faced

and sometimes vilify the labor leaders championed by the "old labor historians." The "new" labor history of the 1970s and 1980s emphasized the cultural milieu of the workplace, and placed a premium on the idea of "artisan republicanism." According to this approach, artisans fought against the market revolution for ideological, rather than materialist reasons. For the Marxist approach, see Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, 7 volumes (New York: International Publishers, 1947-1987). For the "old" labor history, see John Commons, et. al., *History of Labour in the United States*, 4 volumes (New York: MacMillan, 1918-1935). For the "artisan republicanism" approach, see especially Charles Olton, *Artisans for Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1975), and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

direct competition from manufacturers. Yet throughout the city as a whole, only 16 percent of Baltimore's handicraft producers worked in industries where manufactories existed. After 1800, the expansion of the backcountry trade helped create more than two-dozen new types of manufactories. New establishments produced harnesses, hats, textiles, cabinets, piano fortes, earthenware, mill stones, paint, varnish, wire, glue, whips, and a bewildering array of other goods. By 1812, more than 40 percent of the city's artisans worked in industries where manufactories existed. After this point, the percentage of artisans in direct competition with manufacturers leveled off.⁵

Manufactories typically did not emerge in handicraft industries where significant technological advances did not occur, a further division of labor would not have resulted in greater productivity, or the expansion of the backcountry trade had little direct importance. The brickmaking industry exemplified all three trends.⁶ Just north of town near Ridgely's Delight, at the brickyards owned and operated by Henry Nagle and John Allbright, the process of turning clay and water into fired bricks continued in much the same way as it had during the colonial period. When temperatures warmed each spring, Nagle and Allbright hired wage earners, usually enslaved African Americans, to do a range of arduous tasks. Colonial brickmakers had long ago worked out an effective

⁵ *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1800), hereafter cited as 1800 Baltimore Directory; *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812), hereafter cited as 1812 Baltimore Directory; and 1819 Baltimore Directory.

⁶ Plastering was another good example of a trade that fit these trends. The traditional methods of plastering persisted until the advent of prefabricated materials in the late nineteenth century, and plasterers relied upon the local construction market rather than the backcountry trade for their livelihood. Plasterers had also worked out a flexible system for the application of the material that emulated a division of labor. See Harley McKee, *Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar and Plaster* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1973), 81-89.

division of labor for brickyards that organized laborers into gangs of four workers, each with an assigned task. A “wheeler” shoveled clay into a large pit in the ground where a “temperer” used his feet to compress water into the clay. When the mixture of clay and water was smooth, an “off-bearer” removed it from the pit and placed it onto wooden tables. A “moulder” then placed lumps of clay into a wooden mold to fabricate the individual bricks. The “off-bearer” then removed the mold from the table and popped the soft brick out of the mold and onto a raised bed of sand to dry. On a fair day, brickmakers expected each gang to make 44 rows of bricks with 53 bricks per row, or a total of 2,322 bricks per day. After the bricks dried for a week on the mounds, the gang moved the bricks them to a shed where they would continue drying for six more weeks.⁷

The first bricks of the season would have been ready for firing in the kiln in April. As many as 20,000 bricks could be fired at one time. Although the entire work gang assisted in stacking and preparing the bricks in the kiln, this step also required the attention of the master brickmaker. The bricks had to be placed only a finger’s width apart in the kiln to allow heat to draft upwards. Setting the bricks too close or too far apart resulted in bricks being over-fired or under-fired.⁸ The kiln would then be sealed and allowed to fire for six consecutive days, twenty-four hours per day. Members of the work gang needed to feed wood into the kiln to keep the fire burning around the clock,

⁷ John Allbright Account Book, MS.12, and Henry Nagle Account Book, MS.2052, both at MHS. The process of brickmaking is outlined in “Rules to be observed by the hands employed in the brickmaking business, Revised and amended at a meeting of the following Master Brickmakers, in & near the City of Baltimore, published for the mutual benefit of those concerned,” February 23, 1802, in *Early American Imprints*, 2d ser., No. 1804.

⁸ If a firing went well, about half the bricks would be fired properly and most of the rest would be under-fired. Under-fired bricks typically appeared orange or pinkish in color instead of red, but they were still usable for the interiors of walls. Over-fired bricks usually appeared bluish or purplish in color and were normally unusable.

and by the end of the sixth day, the kiln reached temperatures exceeding 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. Other members of the work gang used this time to scrub the drying shed, remove the dust, and if necessary, clean the pit. On the seventh day, the fire was allowed to bank, and a week later, the gang unloaded the bricks, removed the plating from the kiln, and cleaned out crumbs of broken bricks in the kiln.⁹ Barring mechanization of the brickmaking process, any further division of labor would not have been productive.

Thanks to the city's booming housing market in the years following the Revolution, local construction needs rather than an expanding backcountry trade propelled the brickmaking industry. Due to their weight, bricks had a terrible weight-to-value ratio and were thus unsuitable for the backcountry trade. Within the city, however, the brick trade was quite profitable. Without direct competition from manufacturers in their industry, change was seemingly unnecessary. However, manufacturers in other industries had a propensity to hire enslaved African-American workers to do long-term repetitive work. Thus brickmakers and other artisans who traditionally hired enslaved workers competed with manufacturers in other industries for these laborers. Thanks to the ballooning number of different types of manufactories, each with their own specific labor needs, other areas of the city's labor market were similarly affected. Thus artisans who never faced competition from manufacturers for sales, nevertheless faced competition from manufacturers for laborers. With the possibility of ballooning labor costs, artisans across the city eventually had to rethink the social organization of their workplaces whether or not manufactories emerged in their trades. Many artisans realized that this type of indirect competition represented a challenge, but those who proved

⁹ "Rules to be observed by the hands employed in the brickmaking business," in *Early American Imprints*, 2d ser., No. 1804.

unable, unwilling, or believed it unnecessary to adapt to the changing labor market ultimately suffered economic setbacks.

The need to reduce costs prompted Baltimore's brickmakers to instigate changes in their trade. In February 1802, Nagle, Allbright, and eleven other Baltimore-area brickmakers agreed to amend the terms governing the use and employment of workers at their brickyards. In addition to enumerating the specific responsibilities of each member of a work gang, the brickmakers agreed on a long series of penalties for workers who failed to adequately perform specific tasks. If a worker were absent without leave, and the gang allowed rain to wash over drying bricks, the worker paid a fine of 4½ cents per row of bricks. The fine would be deducted from the workers' wages. If one day's production were ruined, the worker would have to pay for 44 rows of bricks, or a fine of \$1.98—the equivalent of 3 or 4 days' wages. If a gang failed to produce 44 rows of bricks on a fair day, they paid ½ cent for every row they were short. Failure to adequately scrub the drying shed cost 1 cent per row, failure to gather the dust cost 12½ cents per load, and failure to properly remove the dust cost an additional 6 cents per load. Failure to help cover the kiln cost 12½ cents per load, and failure to remove the plating from the kiln after a firing cost 6 cents per every 9 inches of plating. The list of penalties dragged on still further to cover almost every area of work at the brickyard.¹⁰

Baltimore's brickmakers did not adopt monetary penalties for workers because of sloughing output at their brickyards. Production at John Allbright's brickyard had swelled from less than 800,000 bricks delivered in 1791 to more than 1¼ million bricks per year by the late 1790s—an increase of more than 50 percent. In 1802, Allbright's

¹⁰ "Rules to be observed by the hands employed in the brickmaking business."

brickyard began delivering bricks as early as January.¹¹ Nor were such regulations necessary because of changes in the types of laborers used at brickyards. Colonial brickmakers had used enslaved laborers and some had even used convict laborers. Yet none of these brickmakers had ever felt the need to set down a Dickensian set of regulations. Instead, the brickmakers' compact was designed to accomplish three interconnected goals.

First, by agreeing on a common set of penalties, the brickmakers contrived to reduce labor costs without cutting their workers' standard wage. This was important because manufacturers could afford to pay competitive wages to enslaved workers, and if brickmakers arbitrarily cut wages, they would not have been able to compete against the manufacturers for those workers. Second, by reducing their labor costs, brickmakers maximized the productivity of their brickyards. This insured that their brickyards remained profitable even when retail prices on commodities increased faster than wholesale prices on building materials, or the local demand for new housing slackened. This proved extremely important between 1802 and 1814 when retail prices increased nearly 50 percent, while wholesale prices on building materials increased only 25 percent. Both price indices fell between 1815 and 1819, but wholesale prices on building materials fell all the way back to their 1802 level, while retail prices remained 7 percent higher in 1819 compared to 1802.¹² Third, by discovering a common way to reduce labor costs, the brickmakers colluded to prevent competition in their industry, thus helping

¹¹ John Allbright Account Book, MHS.

¹² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), II, 201-2, 211.

prevent the emergence of a brick manufacturer with a dozen kilns. The structure of the old household economy thus survived at the brickyards, but the brickmakers' compact ended the traditional or preindustrial ethos of the trade. Brickmakers did not become manufacturers, at least not in way the word was defined in the early nineteenth century, but they ceased to be artisans in the traditional eighteenth-century sense too. The rise of the manufacturers thus compelled changes in workshops across the city whether or not artisans in a particular trade were forced to compete against manufacturers for sales.

For the more than 40 percent of Baltimore's artisans who did face direct market competition from manufacturers, the image of the down-trodden artisan struggling against elite manufacturers fit perfectly. No single artisan can adequately represent the multiplicity of experiences that shaped even these beleaguered handicraft producers. Yet the experiences of George Lightner, a tinsmith whose 1812 tax assessment of \$70 placed him in the bottom 30 percent of Baltimore's property owners—the median for Baltimore's traditional artisans—personified the struggles that many handicraft producers faced in the first decades of the nineteenth century.¹³

In many ways, tinsmiths were an archetypal occupation of the traditional household economy. German tinsmiths had instituted few changes in their trade since the sixteenth century. They handed down their molds, templates, and forms from one generation to the next, and the tools used in the eighteenth century were essentially the same as those in use since the late middle ages. This traditional ethos carried over first to Great Britain and then to the American colonies in the early eighteenth century. Use of these tools required some skill, thus tinsmiths relied on apprentices and journeymen for

¹³ Baltimore Property Tax Records, 1812, RG.4 #1, microfilm reel 83, BCA (hereafter cited as 1812 Baltimore Tax Record).

the skilled laborers the trade demanded. Workers needed to learn to use a variety of “mallets, molds, anvils, shears, snips, punches, chisels, tongs, swages, calipers, and soldering irons.” With a standard set of hand tools, master tinsmiths made an array of pots, pans, graters, ladles, cutters, scoops, measures, molds, kettles, dishes, lamps, candlesticks, and trays among other household items. The tinsmith’s shop also contained a small charcoal stove for heating irons and producing varnishes and solders. Work at the stove required skill because the varnish mixture was extremely flammable and the lead in the solder gave off a noxious bluish haze when heated. Tinsmiths produced their wares for the local market and did not specialize in the production of a single product.¹⁴

Tinsmithing emerged in the American colonies during the early eighteenth century because of the consumer rage for tinplated wares. The process of tinplating likely originated in Bohemia in the fourteenth century, and was known in Germany by the late 1500s. The trade reached England in 1667, when Andrew Yarranton, who had spent the previous two years in Saxony learning the tinplating trade from the Germans, returned to his native country. A commercial market for tinplate emerged in England by 1700, and soon after the demand for tinplated wares spread to the British colonies across the Atlantic. The burnish of the finished metal, its light weight, and its strength made tinplate appealing to American consumers. In the wake of the Revolution, demand for

¹⁴ Shirley Spaulding DeVoe, *The Art of the Tinsmith: English and American* (Exton, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1981), 10, 59, and Jeanette Lasansky, *To Cut, Piece, & Solder: The Work of the Rural Pennsylvania Tinsmith, 1778-1908* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 8, 24-25. Lasansky added that a European-based set of American hand tools also included “the beakhorn-, blowhorn-, bottom-, creasing-, double seaming-, elbow-, hatchet-, needlecase-, and square stakes; circular shears and nippers; coffeepot and colander-, creasing-, elbow-, and square panswedges; grooving tools; hasp-, hollow-, oval-, and solid punches; bumping or raising-, riveting-, and small pepper-box hammers; and rivet sets and headers,” as well as two American innovations, “the hollow punch” and variety of “swedges.” See Lasansky, *To Cut, Piece, & Solder*, 7-8.

tinware surged even more. Tinsmithing subsequently followed a similar path to many other handicraft industries in the early republic. To meet the increased demand, tinsmiths needed to rethink their use of labor, and tinplating manufactories appeared in Baltimore as early as 1800.¹⁵

As in other handicraft industries, the tinsmith trade continued to rely on skilled laborers rather than wide-scale mechanization. The most extensive technological innovations in the trade during the first decades of the nineteenth century were the machine tools introduced by Calvin Whiting and Eli Parsons of Dedham, Massachusetts. The most important of Whiting's and Parsons's inventions included circular shears, a burring machine, a setting down machine, a wiring machine, and a rolling machine which clamped to the end of a workbench and allowed workers to hand-crank tin sheet over wire. Master tinsmiths had hand-hammered sheet metal before the introduction of the rolling machine. The machine tools enabled less-skilled workers to fashion forms more precisely and in one-fourth the time compared to traditional methods, but the means of production remained a handicraft process. Whiting's and Parsons's inventions did not automate the production of tinware. Furthermore, most tinsmiths were unable to take advantage of the innovations. Unlike Oliver Evans, who publicized the details of his invention, thus enabling others to copy the process without paying royalties, Whiting and Parsons were far more prudent. Tinsmiths had to purchase the patent rights in order to

¹⁵ DeVoe, *The Art of the Tinsmith*, v-vii, 9-10, 125-26, and Lasansky, *To Cut, Piece, & Solder*, 4, 15. Early nineteenth-century American tin manufactories produced tinware, not sheet metal, and were therefore in direct competition with tinsmiths. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the United States continued to import almost 100 percent of its rolled tin from Great Britain and the British Empire. The process of producing the sheet metal was not overly complicated. The most significant reason for the lack of a domestic sheet metal industry was the apparent lack of any significant tin deposits in the United States. At the end of the nineteenth century, when extensive tin deposits were discovered in Virginia, South Dakota, and California, a domestic sheet metal

use the machine tools. Wide-scale distribution of the technology did not begin in earnest until Seth Peck, a Massachusetts tinsmith, purchased the patent rights in 1816 and began manufacturing the machine tools themselves. True mechanization did not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century, when steam processes and die-stamping were first introduced.¹⁶

A traditional tinsmith, with or without machine tools, could individually perform all the required to produce a range of finished tinware products, but the production of tinware was especially well-suited to the division of labor in a manufactory. A master tinsmith hammered sheets of tin around forms, templates, and molds, creating the basic shapes for the tinware. Apprentices or journeymen would then use files to smooth the edges of the seams and joints. Tinware cannot be welded, and thus semi-skilled workers soldered the joints and seams with a heated mixture of half-tin, half-iron. The tinware could then be left uncoated, it could be planished to achieve a high gloss, or it could be japanned for protection and decoration. “Japanned ware” imitated the lacquered finishes of imported Asian goods, and city directories included listings for “japanners,” or skilled workers who specialized in this stage of the process.¹⁷ Japanners made a basic English varnish by dissolving asphaltum, a residue of coal tar, gum resins, and amber in a heated mixture of linseed oil, alcohol, and turpentine. Tinware was dipped in the varnish and left to dry in a charcoal oven for several hours. The japanners could then paint designs

industry finally emerged. See Lasansky, *To Cut, Piece, and Solder*, 18-19.

¹⁶ DeVoe, *The Art of the Tinsmith*, 133-140, and Lasansky, *To Cut, Piece, & Solder*, 7-9.

¹⁷ Asian lacquer, or *rhuslack*, had three problems: contact with skin caused severe dermatitis, it came from a tree in the sumac family, *rhus vernicifera*, that was not native to either Europe or the Americas, and the Asian process of lacquering was extraordinarily elaborate. Consequently, English tinsmiths adopted varnishes to mimic the finishes on imported lacquered products. DeVoe, *The Art of the Tinsmith*, 99.

and decoration on the tinware before the final coat of clear varnish was applied. For “planished ware,” the tinsmith hammered the sheet metal itself with a broad-faced mallet before creating the forms. After the solderer fitted the joints together, a semi-skilled worker used a jeweller’s cloth to polish the tinware to a glossed finish, giving it a silvery surface. A manufactory might also employ unskilled workers, but they would have been used in a limited capacity to clean up the scraps of tin, solder drippings, and file shavings from the floor, clean the charcoal oven, and keep the various molds, templates, forms, and wire organized on the shop’s wall.¹⁸

Tinsmiths like Lightner who either could not or did not take advantage of a division of labor confronted stiff competition from the new tin manufactories. Reducing costs became a necessity, and Lightner faced his most pressing challenge during the winter months. Not long after the first frost descended upon the city each year, traffic in the harbor began to taper off. When the weather turned especially cold, commerce sometimes ceased altogether. In January 1784, George Johonnot complained to his brother Frank that “we have experienced as cold a season” in Baltimore “as the worst of ‘79,” and discouraged a sale of mackeral from Daniel Sargent of Boston. Johonnot explained to Sargent that trade with both the Eastern and Western Shores was “finished on account of the ice,” and thus “the demand for goods is not so great.” John Weatherburn recalled a particularly oppressive winter in 1805 when “our navigation was shutt by the frost from 3rd January to the 26 February . . . This made a long winter, which was injurious to commerce and oppressive to the poor.” It was so cold in mid-February

¹⁸ Devoe, *The Art of the Tinsmith*, 62, 99-121, 165-66.

1817 that the inner harbor actually froze over.¹⁹

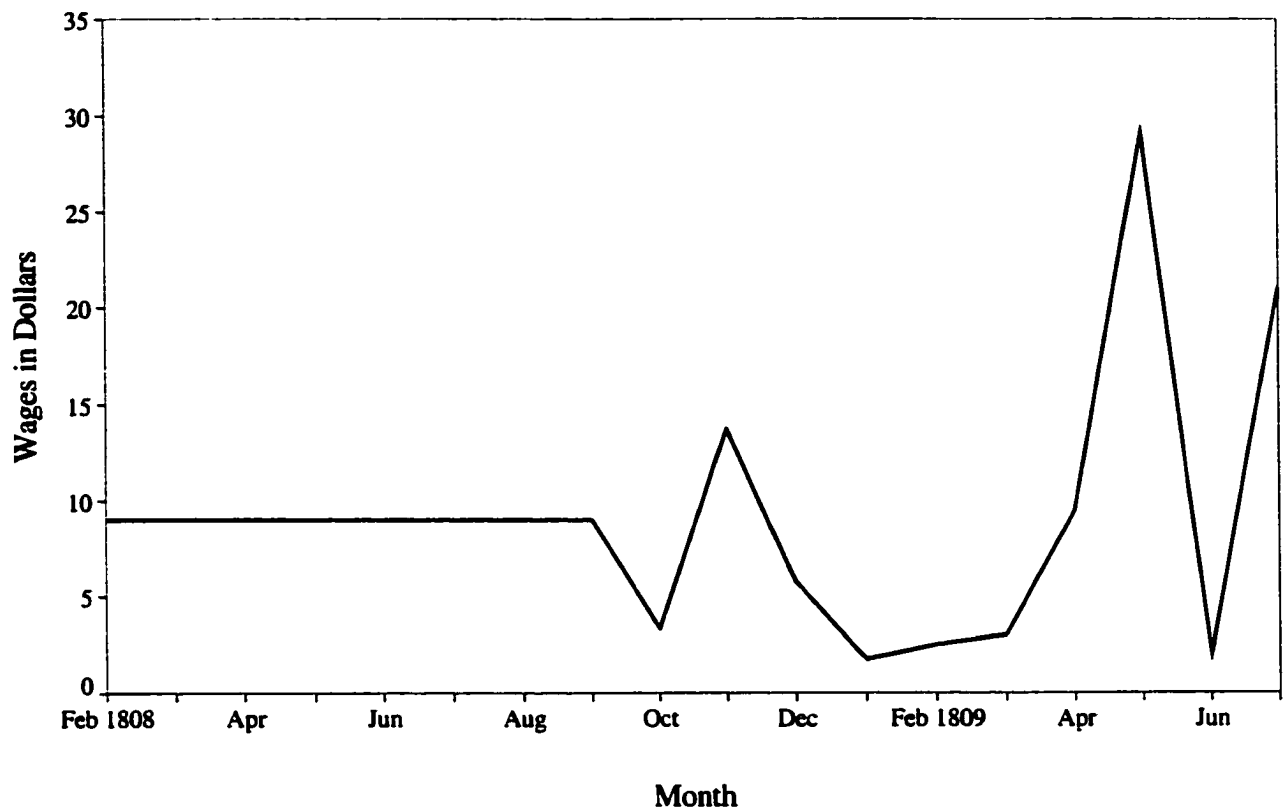
Without commercial traffic during the winter, the local economy shuddered to a near standstill. Artisans were accustomed to seasonal slowdowns and overcame the lack of economic activity between December and March with vigorous sales at other times during the year. Yet with manufacturers encompassing an ever-greater percentage of the city's local market after 1800, artisans could no longer be sure that sales during the spring, summer, and autumn would balance deficits incurred during the winter. For many troubled shops, the need to control costs during the winter loomed as the most urgent concern. To meet the challenge, an increasing percentage of the city's artisans hired wage earners on a part-time basis. Unlike apprentices and enslaved workers for whom employers had a legal obligation of support during the winter months, wage earners could be dismissed from service at almost any time.

As early as 1808, George Lightner made the switch to using part-time wage labor. On July 19, he contracted William Stewart for three months at nine dollars per month to "do all faithfull Labour and obey all Lawful Commands." When Stewart's contract expired in October, no new agreement was drawn up. Instead, Stewart worked on an intermittent basis for Lightner and thus his wages varied wildly from month-to-month, as seen in Figure 8-1. In November, he received nearly fourteen dollars. During the winter, when business at the shop came to a near halt, Stewart received a grand total of just

¹⁹ Johnson, Johonnot & Co. to Frank [Francis Johonnot], January 17, 1784, and Johnson, Johonnot & Co. to Daniel Sargent, January 2, 178[4], both in Johnson, Johonnot & Co. Letterbook, MS.498, MHS; John Weatherburn to sister [Hannah], March 23, 1805, John Weatherburn Collection, MS.44, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University, quoted in Seth Rockman, "Working for Wages in Early Republic Baltimore: Unskilled Labor and the Blurring of Slavery and Freedom," (Ph.D., University of California, Davis, 1999), 188; and *Baltimore American*, February 17, 1817.

Figure 8-1

William Stewart's Monthly Wages between February 1808 and July 1809



Source: George Lightner Account Book, MS.1173, Maryland Historical Society.

thirteen dollars over four months. Many of these payments were likely not made in cash. In Lightner's ledger, entries made during the summer listed the amount of each payment to Stewart with the notation "cash for self." During the winter, however, several notations appeared with the notation "cash at sundry," "cash for mother," and "cash for shoes." The distinction may indicate that Lightner paid Stewart in goods rather than wages, or that Lightner allowed Stewart to purchase shoes and sundries on Lightner's account, and these purchases were then counted as wages paid. Either way, Lightner clearly limited his costs during the winter by employing Stewart on a part-time basis. Assuming a six-day workweek, Stewart's contract for nine dollars per month yielded an average wage rate of approximately 34½ cents per day. Between December and March, Stewart's average daily wages amounted to approximately 12½ cents per day, thus saving Lightner almost \$23 in labor costs over the four-month period.²⁰

For many artisans, the possibility of achieving the savings Lightner realized in the winter of 1808-1809 was the primary attraction of using part-time wage labor. Employing wage earners instead of apprentices or enslaved labor presented long-term costs. The tinsmith trade required skilled workers, yet Stewart was unskilled. Over the course of the year, Stewart likely gained some training and increased his productivity, but he left the shop after a year. Lightner made no further notations in his ledger for Stewart beyond July 1809, and instead hired a new wage earner, James Davis, at the rate of nine dollars per month. The records do not reveal whether or not Davis knew anything

²⁰ George Lightner Account Book, MHS. The calculations for the daily wage rate are based upon the worker's total compensation divided by the total potential number of workdays in the given period, assuming a six-day workweek. For example, the contract for July 19 to October 19, 1808 included exactly 13 weeks, or 78 possible workdays. At \$9 per month, the total compensation amounted to \$27, and thus an average daily wage of 34.6 cents per day. All subsequent calculations for daily wage rates will be based on a standard workweek of six days.

about working in a tinsmith's shop, but most unskilled laborers would not have possessed any prior training in a particular artisan's trade. Thus Lightner was faced with the necessity of training a new person, and the productivity of the shop would have lagged. Retention of skilled workers was a recurrent problem, and the practice of hiring a succession of unskilled workers guaranteed that Lightner would never realize the productivity gains that manufacturers achieved. Employing apprenticed or enslaved labor would have solved this problem, but it would have also cost Lightner more in the short-term. During the period when Stewart worked part time, including the winter months, his average daily wage rate was actually higher than his wages would have been under a contract. When the port roared back to life in the spring and early summer, Stewart received nearly ten dollars in April, almost thirty dollars in May, and just over twenty dollars in July. His compensation for June amounted to just two dollars, but his average monthly wages between April and July exceeded fifteen dollars per month. For the nine months in which he worked part-time, Stewart earned approximately 38 cents per day. Thus if Lightner had kept Stewart under contract at nine dollars per month, the equivalent of a wage rate of 34½ cents per day, Stewart would have earned just \$108 for the year; instead, Stewart received a grand total of \$115.86 for the year, or an average wage rate of 37½ cents per day.²¹

The difference of nearly eight dollars between Stewart's actual compensation and his potential compensation under a contract would have been enough, under wage rates that Stewart received, to hire a second worker for three weeks. Lightner was unwilling to take this route, because the increasing competition from manufacturers created enough

²¹ George Lightner Account Book, MHS.

uncertainty about the local market to make the prospect of employing wage earners under contracts appear too risky. Artisans like Lightner thus adopted a pay-as-you-go approach to minimize the risk of paying too much for labor during hard times. Others because they could not afford to maintain unfree laborers during the winter months. Yet by sacrificing long-term needs for the sake of short-term expediency, small shops atrophied in the new economy. The strategy maximized the risk of paying too much for labor during good times, and undercut any possibility that a workshop could realize productivity gains in the long-term. For Lightner, however, lost productivity was at best a secondary concern to reducing costs in a competitive economy.

Whether he was hired part-time or under a contract, Stewart's wages were extremely poor compared to the wages that wage laborers received working for manufacturers. At Joseph Despeaux's shipyard in Fell's Point, skilled workers received between \$1.25 and \$2.00 per day. One of Despeaux's carpenters could have equaled Stewart's annual wage compensation in less than eight weeks. At Ellicott's Mills on the Patapsco River, fifteen miles southeast of Baltimore, new adult hands at the Union Manufacturing Company only received \$2.00 per week to start, or the equivalent of 33 cents per day. Wages quickly increased, however, to the standard wage of \$3.00 per week, or 50 cents per day. Those who worked the spinning mules earned \$8.00 to \$12.00 per week, or \$1.33 to \$2.00 per day. In the city, journeymen cordwainers earned \$3.00 for each pair of finished boots. A typical worker was able to complete three pairs per week, and after paying the expenses for materials, journeymen thus earned approximately \$8.50 per week, or a wage rate of \$1.42 per day. Journeymen tailors made \$7.00 per

week, or \$1.17 per day.²² George Lightner's struggles forced him to pay William Stewart less than half that amount, and yet he was still unable to achieve the productivity gains that Despeaux and other manufacturers realized.

Even when compared to other unskilled workers, Stewart's average wage rate was still not competitive. In 1809, the city paid a standard wage of \$1.12½ per day for work on the mudmachine dredging the harbor. It would have taken a mudmachinist just three months to earn as much as Stewart received over an entire year. Work on the mudmachine paid more than most manual labor jobs, and the continuous need to dredge the harbor created a constant demand for workers that existed in few other places in the city. The same was not true of other industries. At the Maryland Chemical Works, David and Richard McKim typically paid free wage laborers \$4.50 for a six-day workweek, or the equivalent of 75 cents per day. An unskilled worker at Joseph Despeaux's shipyard also earned at least 75 cents per day, and John Allbright and Henry Nagle paid enslaved workers approximately 50 to 75 cents per day to work at their brickyards. If the winter months are excluded, Stewart's average wage rate as a part-time worker amounted to 58 cents per day, making his wages competitive with the more poorly paid workers at the city's brickyards. Stewart's compensation was also on par with what it cost the McKims to maintain enslaved laborers at their chemical works. The total cost for term slaves, including maintenance costs, capital depreciation, capital

²² For wages at Joseph Despeaux's shipyard, see Joseph Despeaux Account Book, MS.294, MHS, quoted in Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 41-42. For wages at the Union Manufacturing Company, see Isaac Briggs Papers, MS.147, MHS, quoted in Lynda Fuller Clendenning, "The Early Textile Industry in Maryland, 1810-1850," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 87 (1992): 262. For wages of journeymen cordwainers and tailors, see Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 214, 221.

opportunity, taxes, and property loss resulting from deaths or runaways, came to approximately 40 cents per day. Workers enslaved for life cost approximately 40 and 65 cents per day, and hired enslaved workers cost approximately 50 to 65 cents per day.²³

Part of the reason for the disparity between Stewart's wages and those of other workers arose from differences in the nature of the work in each handicraft trade. The specific tasks workers performed at Henry Nagle's and John Allbright's brickyards, or the McKims' Chemical Works were quite different from those Stewart completed at Lightner's shop. Yet these differences can be exaggerated, and it is unlikely that the disparity in wages rested entirely with differences in the work required in each trade. In each case, employers relied on workers to do physical, repetitious labor. At times, work at a brickyard, a chemical works, or a tin shop could prove extremely hazardous, and injuries were common to workers in all three trades. Another reason for the disparity was the difference between the employers. The McKims employed a calculated division of labor designed to maximize productivity whereas Lightner relied on traditional methods. In comparison to the brickmakers, tinsmiths had faced withering competition from manufacturers since at least the turn of the century. Not surprisingly, the wages Lightner could afford to pay Stewart amounted to a portion of what the brickmakers paid most of their workers. Not every laborer worked for a struggling artisan, and those hired by Henry Nagle, John Allbright, Joseph Despeaux, and the McKims clearly received better

²³ For wages of the mudmachinists, see Rockman, "Working for Wages," 121. For wages at the McKims' Maryland Chemical Works, see Maryland Chemical Works Account Book Collection, MS.547.2, MHS, quoted in T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 54-56. For wages at Despeaux's yard, see Joseph Despeaux Account Book, MS.294, MHS, quoted in Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 41-42. For wages of workers at the city's brickyards, see John Allbright Account Book and Henry Nagle Account Book, both at MHS.

wages than Stewart. Yet Lightner's struggles did recur in many trades throughout the city, and this suggests that Stewart's meager wages may not have been uncommon throughout the city.

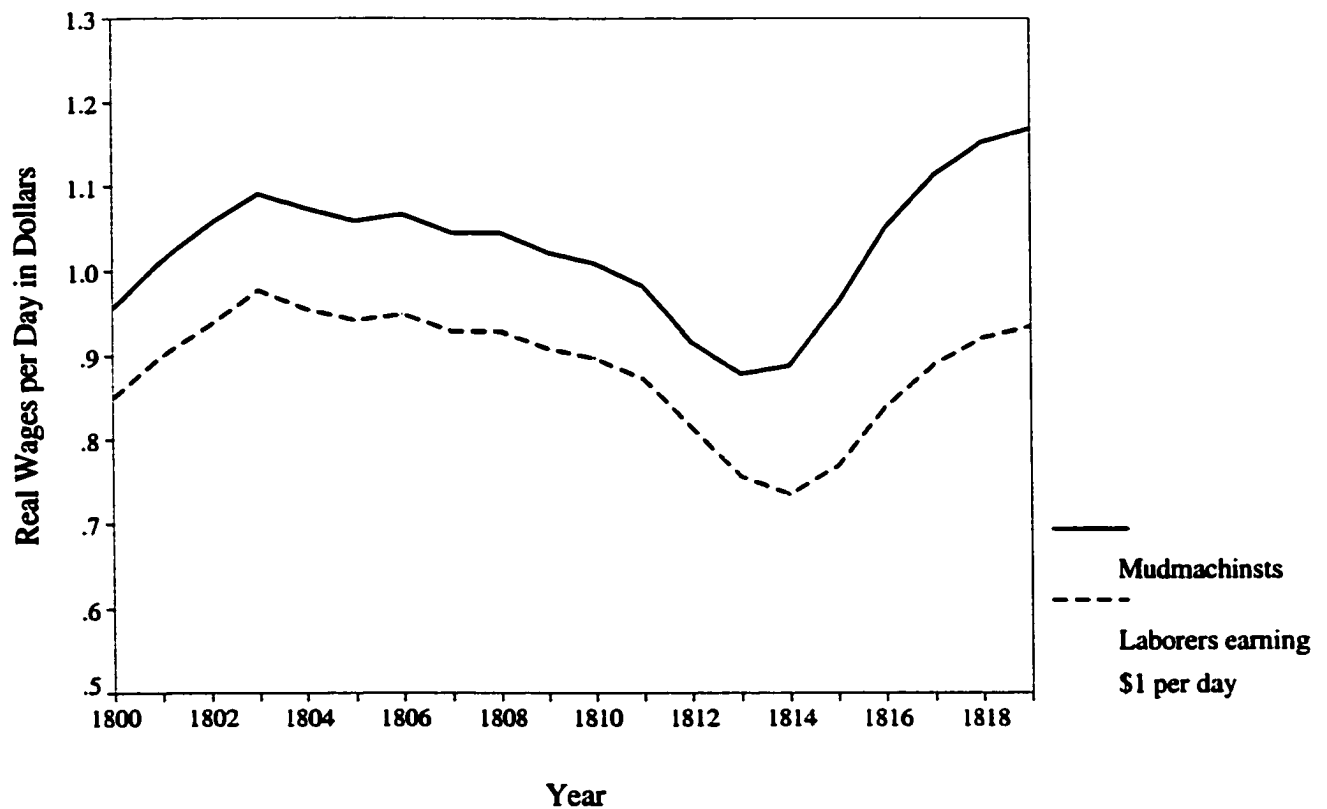
Regardless of their employer, most laborers faced steadily worsening economic circumstances in the early nineteenth century. During the early 1790s, the nominal average wage rate for an unskilled urban laborer rose from 50 cents to \$1.00 per day. Prices also increased steadily, but the rate of increase did not exceed the growth in wages. Unskilled workers experienced an increase in their real wages, or spending power. Beginning in the late 1790s, the average wage rate stagnated at about \$1.00 per day, where it remained for decades. Yet real wages continued to climb in the years immediately surrounding the turn of the century because prices fell in the wake of the Panic of 1797.²⁴ Most workers would not have been able to take full advantage of the real increase in wage rates between 1797 and 1802, because they would have likely worked fewer days during the economic downturn.

When the hard times ended and commerce rebounded after the Peace of Amiens in 1802, prices also began increasing. By the War of 1812, they had risen almost 50 percent. Wage rates continued to stagnate throughout the city thanks to the artisan community's need to control costs. Rising prices combined with stagnant wages meant that real wages declined steadily. As seen in Figure 8-2, the spending power of a dollar in 1814 was worth just 68 cents compared to its value in 1802. The real wage rate for a worker earning 75 cents per day amounted to just 60 cents in 1814 compared to 1802. Even the mudmachinists, who received higher compensation than most other wage

²⁴ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, I, 163, 205, 211.

Figure 8-2

Three-Year Moving Averages for Real Wages, 1800-1819



Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), I, 163, and Seth Rockman, "Working for Wages in Early Republic Baltimore: Unskilled Labor and the Blurring of Slavery and Freedom" (Ph.D., University of California, Davis, 1999), 121.

earners, suffered from the price inflation. Their standard wage rate of \$1.12½ per day did not increase to \$1.25 until 1815.²⁵ With retail prices rocketing upward, however, a wage of \$1.12½ per day was worth only 91 cents in 1814 compared to 1808. Real wages finally improved after 1815 when prices finally began to fall, but in the previous twenty years, whether a worker was employed by a manufacturer, by an artisan competing against manufacturers, or by an artisan who did not face such competition largely did not matter. No matter whom they worked for, wage-earning Baltimoreans faced precipitous declines in their real income through the War of 1812.

BELEAGUERED HOUSEHOLDS

The declining fortunes of small workshops meant a loss of real income for artisans and the wage earners who worked for them. With revenues at artisans' shops falling, and workers' real wages declining, families had to find new ways to supplement household income or invent new methods of saving on household expenses just to maintain the status quo. Fortunately, the revenues of an artisan's shop and the wages earned by workers were not the only sources of income for eighteenth-century families. The household economy was based upon a gendered division of labor in which wives contributed significantly to the family's income.²⁶

Employment in traditional handicraft trades provided only a few women with a significant source of income, and the city directories reveal that the percentage of women engaged in business did not change significantly between 1800 and 1819. Women

²⁵ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, I, 163, 205, 211, and Rockman, "Working for Wages," 121.

²⁶ For the gendered division of labor in the household economy, see the discussion in chapter one.

consistently represented just 1½ to 2 percent of all Baltimore artisans throughout this period. The distribution of trades in which women participated also remained steady. Traditional artisans, of whom mantua makers and milliners were the predominant trades, accounted for 15 percent of all non-widowed women with occupations listed in the 1800 city directory, and 11 percent of those listed in the 1819 directory. Grocers, shopkeepers, and other retailers consistently represented 19 to 21 percent of non-widows, and the percentage of women in teaching positions remained relatively constant. Although the percentage of women operating boarding houses and inns fell from 23 percent to 2 percent between 1800 and 1819, the directories likely undercount the number of women who rented out a single room or two.²⁷ Like their male counterparts, women in traditional handicraft trades also faced declining revenues.

Ironically, the rise of the manufacturers sometimes boosted the amount of income wives and children could earn. The expansion of Baltimore's textile industry is an excellent example of this trend. The Embargo of 1807 spurred the establishment of textile manufactories, and the number of mills in and around Baltimore increased from 11 to 18 between 1810 and 1820. Unlike the New England establishments, where employers followed either the Waltham or Fall River plan and hired mostly young women to operate the spinning machines, Maryland manufacturers mostly hired children. Of the 501 workers employed at textile manufactories in and around Baltimore in 1820, 366 were children, mostly girls, 98 were adult men and only 37 were young women. The Union Manufacturing Company epitomized this trend, employing 104 girls, 16 boys, 10 men,

²⁷ 1800 Baltimore Directory; 1812 Baltimore Directory; and 1819 Baltimore Directory.

and no women in 1820.²⁸

In a society steeped in the tradition of apprenticeship, the idea of employing children was not objectionable. Quite the opposite, Hezekiah Niles, publisher of the influential and nationally distributed newspaper *Niles Weekly Register*, applauded the use of young girls in manufactories as a brilliant way of “transmuting some useless substance into pure gold.” Children’s wages varied based upon age at the Union Manufacturing Company with the youngest (seven to nine years old) receiving as little as 75 cents per week, a wage rate of just 12½ cents per day. Those who remained under continual employment received \$2.25 per week, or 37½ cents per day, by the time they reached the age of twelve.²⁹ Over the course of a year, a child could thus augment household income by as much as \$30 to \$90.

Adult women also benefited from the expansion of the textile industry through the 1820s. The invention of the spinning jenny, the water frame, and the spinning mule provided a mechanized way to turn cotton and wool fiber into thread and yarn, but a workable power loom to produce finished cloth was not introduced until the 1830s. Until then, manufacturers relied on outwork where seamstresses and weavers produced finished cloth from the manufactured yarn and thread. The number of seamstresses listed in the city directories quadrupled between 1800 and 1819, which suggests that many women in Baltimore were able to supplement the household’s income with wages earned from outwork. Wages varied depending on the type of outwork, but in general, manufacturers paid women rather poorly. In the early 1820s, a seamstress earned 6¼ to

²⁸ Clendenning, “The Early Textile Industry in Maryland,” 252, 262.

²⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, June 7, 1817. For wages of children as textile workers, see Isaac Briggs Papers, MS.147, MHS, quoted in Clendenning, “The Early Textile Industry,” 262.

12½ cents for each finished pair of pantaloons.³⁰ Assuming that a housewife could stitch together 3 pairs of pantaloons per day, six days per week, she would have earned \$1.12½ to \$2.25 per week. At this pace, a seamstress could have augmented her household's income by as much as \$40 to \$90 per year, but such a pace was not sustainable. The availability of outwork was both erratic and seasonal, and few women received outwork every week of the year. Actual earnings from outwork usually fell well short of potential earnings, and women who relied solely on these wages for their subsistence faced grinding poverty.

At times, outwork occurred closer to home. Beginning in the 1780s, shoemakers' wives began spinning flax into shoe thread and sewing together leather uppers for shoes. The latter process came to known as shoebinding. Unlike other types of outwork, shoebinding by wives reduced the family's need for cash expenditures rather than increase the household's income through wage earnings. After 1810, shoebinding gradually became a part-time wage-earning occupation for women outside shoemaking families. Prior to 1810, however, a wife's activities as a shoebinder proved important to both her household's income and the competitiveness of her husband's shop.³¹

Domestic service represented another area of employment that women looked to for supplementary income. From 1800 through the 1820s, however, enslaved African

³⁰ J. Morgan, *The Manufacturer's Book of Wages and Workpeople's Companion* (Baltimore: R.J. Matchett, 1825), quoted in Rockman, "Working for Wages," 169-71.

³¹ Mary Blewett, "The Sexual Division of Labor and the Artisan Tradition in Early Industrial Capitalism: The Case of New England Shoemaking, 1780-1860," in Carol Groenman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *"To Toil the Live Long Day": America's Women at Work, 1780-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 35-46. Patterns of work in the mid-Atlantic shoemaking trade paralleled changes occurring in New England. See John Commons, "American Shoemakers, 1648-1895: A Sketch of Industrial Evolution," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 24 (1909): 39-84.

Americans dominated most areas of domestic service. A few Irish and German immigrant women gained employment as laundresses, cooks, and house servants, but almost 95 percent of those who advertised in newspapers for employment in these occupations were African Americans, mostly enslaved. The position of child's nurse was the only major domestic occupation where whites represented a significant minority in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Racial stratification in domestic service largely disappeared after 1830, and historian Stephanie Cole observed that "over the years, any housekeeper perusing the ads would have noticed a substantial change."³²

The racial divide in domestic service is not surprising. Occupations associated with slavery, and African Americans generally, carried a racial stigma that encouraged whites to accept only certain types of domestic employment. African Americans depended on these racist assumptions to limit the labor pool for domestic service jobs. Thus a race-specific separation of domestic service tasks emerged—a hierarchy of labor imposed by the workers themselves. This racial divide was reinforced by the actions of the Baltimore Orphans Court. In border cities like Baltimore, 60 percent of African American apprentices, including 47 percent of African American boys, were tracked into domestic service jobs. Only 15 percent of all whites, and less than 2 percent of white boys, were steered in the same path. With the exception of nurses, domestic service occupations presented limited opportunities for white women trying to supplement household incomes during the first decades of the nineteenth century.³³

The need to supplement household income, and the difficulty of finding

³² Stephanie Cole, "Servants and Slaves: Domestic Service in the Border Cities, 1800-1850" (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1994), 60, and Appendix A.

³³ Cole, "Servants and Slaves," 59-96, and Appendix B.

reasonable ways to accomplish this in the city, placed enormous strains on a woman's available time. Stitching together clothing for wages did not replace cooking, cleaning, and laundering, working in a husband's shop, looking after her own children, producing home manufactures for the household, and all the other tasks traditionally expected of a wife and mother. To create the additional time needed to do outwork or domestic service, women had to substantially increase the productivity of housework. This proved especially difficult after the Revolution because women often had to invest more, rather than less time doing traditional household tasks.

The demands of Republican Motherhood expanded the amount of time women needed to dedicate to child rearing.³⁴ The growing demands on mothers came at a time, however, when working-class women and the wives of artisans could least afford to invest greater amounts of time and energy in child rearing. Women also spent more time shopping. During the colonial period, husbands often accepted food and goods as payment or wages, and otherwise did a significant amount of the family's purchasing. After the Revolution, as the cash-based economy steadily advanced, wives assumed greater responsibility for the family's shopping. A wife's ability as a prudent consumer played an increasingly greater role in determining whether or not a household's income would meet its expenses.³⁵

Women also spent more time cooking. Despite the introduction of the cooking stove, which was supposed to be a labor-saving device, the growing popularity of white

³⁴ See the discussion in chapter four.

³⁵ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 103. For the expansion of traditional housework after the Revolution, also see Annegret Ogden, *The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner, 1776-1986* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 3-32.

bread made from superfine, or white flour meant that women dedicated more time to baking than they had during the colonial period. During the colonial period, husbands typically ground rye or wheat every few days to make flour, or they took the grain in small quantities to the local grist mill. Once ground into flour, rye and wheat deteriorate quickly. White, or superfine flour, was deprived of both wheat germ and bran, and thus did not deteriorate as quickly. Prior to the Revolution, white flour was expensive because it could not be produced at home, and grist mills were unable to produce much of it. After the introduction of Oliver Evans's automated milling process, and its widespread reproduction after 1795, the merchant-mills outside Baltimore produced white flour in bulk, and at a fraction of the previous cost. This eliminated a burdensome chore for husbands, who had previously ground grain into flour themselves, or hauled it to the grist mill. Yet baking white bread took longer than making cornbread, griddle cakes, or colonial quick-breads, and the switch meant that wives spent far more time in the kitchen. This was especially true in middle-class homes, where, according to Ruth Schwartz Cowan, white bread became a symbol of class status in the early nineteenth century.³⁶ With the mills along the Patapsco at the epicenter of industrialization in the flour-milling industry, Baltimore's wives faced this trend earlier than most. Of course no one was forcing Baltimoreans to bake white bread, but as John Stuart Mill once pointed out, the social pressure of the masses can often be far more coercive than even the actions of dictatorial governments.

In the wake of the Revolution, there was indeed more work for mother.

Strangely, however, most commentators believed exactly the opposite was true in the

³⁶ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 46-63.

early republic. Public recognition of the value of housework had wavered throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the transformation of housework into a leisure activity took on greater urgency in the wake of the Revolution. Feminist reformers who hoped to advance the cause of women's education, contributed to this view. Although the article was not published until 1790, Judith Sargent Murray argued in 1779 that "every requisite in female economy is easily attained," and thus women should have ample time to follow intellectual pursuits. The attitude that housework was not time-consuming developed further in the wake of early industrialization. By the 1830s, writers referred to housework in pastoral terms, such as *duties*, *offices*, or *chores* that required no labor to be completed. Cooking, cleaning, and other domestic work were "labors of love" rather than work.³⁷

Advancing economic inequality also contributed to the what historian Jeanne Boydston has called the "pastorialization of housework." During the colonial period, yeoman farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, wage earners, and even professionals relied upon a gendered division of labor to meet the cash needs of the household. In the nineteenth century, wives' earnings remained important only to working-class families. As Boydston demonstrated, the cash value of housework by a poor woman, which equaled approximately \$300 per year in 1860, often surpassed the value of her husband's earnings. In middle-class families, women had additional opportunities to make money by taking on boarders or engaging in home manufactures. The cash value of housework could easily increase to \$700 or even \$1,000 per year, and as a supplement to the income

³⁷ Boydston, *Home and Work*, 9-11, 142-60. Murray quoted in Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 252.

of a beleaguered artisan, a wife's earnings could still make a significant contribution to the household's income.³⁸ As early as 1819, however, a typical manufacturer in Baltimore possessed nearly three times the amount of assessed property as an average artisan. Assuming that this disparity reflected differences in income between manufacturers and artisans, a manufacturer's wife who earned as much as \$1,000 contributed a much smaller portion to the household's income in percentage terms than a poor woman who earned just \$300. If a manufacturer or a merchant earned as much as \$5,000 per year, their wives' earnings could easily be dismissed as inconsequential. The rise of the manufacturers thus contributed to the growing belief in the relative worthlessness of housework as an economic activity.

The pastoralization of housework in the nineteenth century led to social and political pressure to remove women from the labor market and the marketplace. As a result, many of the traditional sources of income available to women in the eighteenth century were less available in the nineteenth century. Many women had traditionally relied upon huckstering, or reselling produce on the streets they earlier bought at market, to provide cash for their families. In 1816, however, the City Council passed an ordinance that forbid hucksters to peddle goods on the streets without a license. The law carried a stiff fine, and in May, four women, each of whom had been fined \$1.58 for unlicensed huckstering, petitioned the City Council for a special dispensation under the law. They argued that without a "mechanical trade, no manufacturing faculty, [and] no stock," they could "obtain no employment" other than huckstering. If "they must be fettered from possible industry," they felt sure that the almshouse would be their only

³⁸ Boydston, *Home and Work*, 132-60.

remaining recourse. The City Council rejected the petition, insuring that a traditional source of income for many families would disappear.³⁹ The ban on huckstering meant that in addition to searching for ways to supplement their husbands' falling incomes, adjusting to the increased amounts of housework, and accommodating the new demands of Republican Motherhood, many women had to find ways to cover shortfalls in their own cash earnings. For many families, this was simply asking too much.

Even if detailed household accounts existed, it is impossible to determine by how much wives' contributions to household income changed in the early republic. As Boydston argued, much of "the cash value of housework was embedded in the collectivity of the family."⁴⁰ This remained true in the early nineteenth century. What could be analyzed on a monetary basis—sale of vegetables in the streets or at market, wages earned from outwork or domestic employment—was ultimately subsumed in the husband's income under the laws of coverture. As husbands combined their earnings with those of other family members to convert cash into property, the subsequent records generated by taxes on that property obliquely reveal differences in total household income over time. Yet there is no way to distinguish between the different family members' contributions in the eventual acquisition of that property. What can be determined is that in artisan families, the wife's earnings likely increased as a percentage of the household's income, but the family as a whole was unable to prevent an overall

³⁹ *Ordinances of the City of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Warner, 1816), ordinance 12, and "Petition to Baltimore City Council," 1816, item 327, Baltimore City Archives, both quoted in Seth Rockman, "Women's Labor, Gender Ideology, and Working-Class Households in Early Republic Baltimore," in *Explorations in Early American Culture*, supplemental issue of *Pennsylvania History*, 66 (1999): 174.

⁴⁰ Boydston, *Home and Work*, 134.

decline.

Between 1798 and 1818, the average artisan's assessed property declined by more than one-third relative to the city's mean, from 91 percent of the city's mean in 1798 to just 57 percent in 1818. As seen in Figure 8-3, the decline in artisans' assessed property was apparent in every strata of wealth. In 1798, artisans were almost evenly distributed throughout the tax record. By 1812, however, the majority of Baltimore's artisans were in the bottom half of the city's assessments, and those in the bottom 40 percent had increased from 39 to 48 percent of all artisans. On the other end of the economic scale, artisans among the wealthiest 20 percent of property owners declined from 18 to 11 percent. By 1818, the artisans' fortunes had worsened still further. Just 7 percent were among the wealthiest 20 percent of the city, two out of every three artisans were in the bottom half of the city's assessments, and a majority were in the bottom third.⁴¹

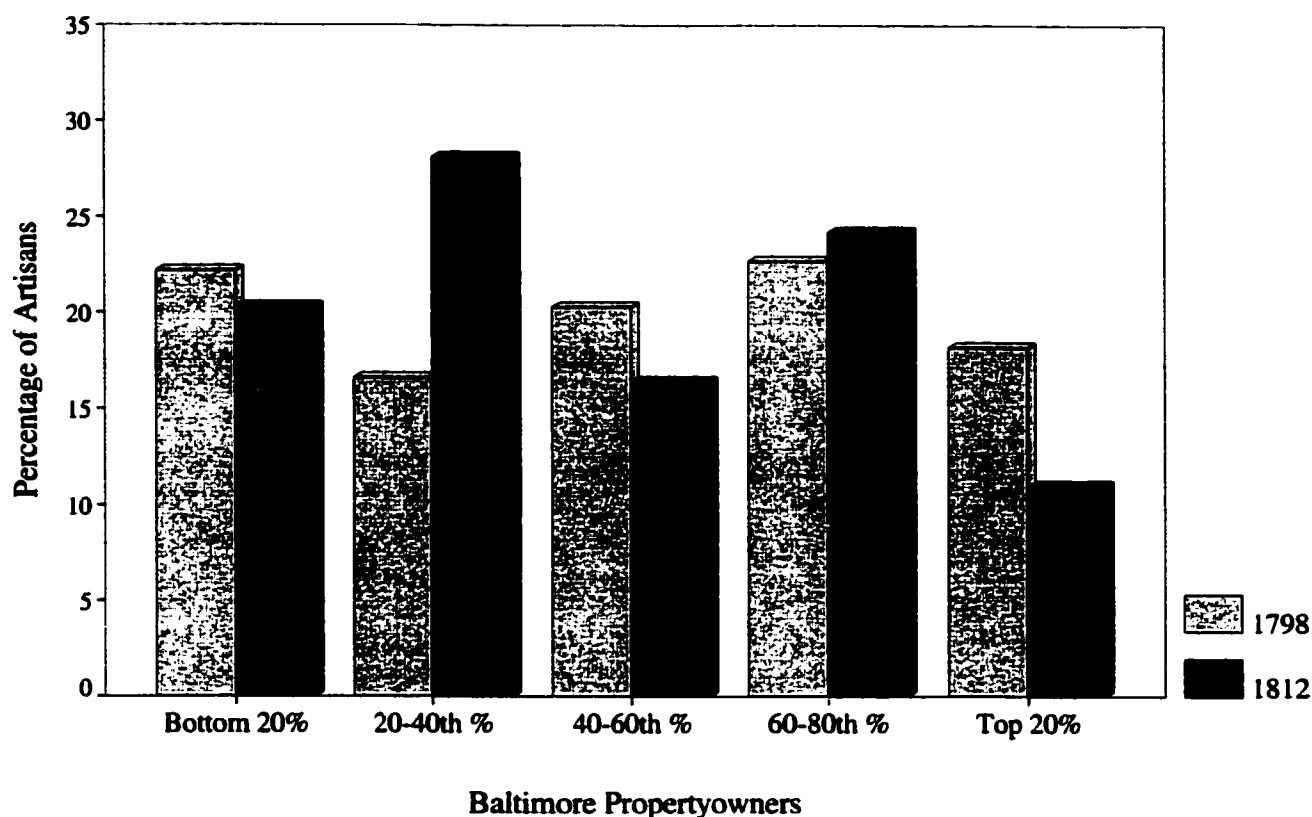
It is difficult to determine whether or not working-class families fared better. The average assessment for laborers listed in the city directories was 43 percent of the city's mean in 1798, and 37 percent in 1819.⁴² This suggests that working-class households coped with the transformation of the city's economy better than middle-class families, but the city directories and property tax records do not provide a comprehensive portrait of the working class. Laborers as a percentage of the occupations listed in the directories fluctuated wildly, and many working-class families never appeared on tax roles because

⁴¹ 1800 Baltimore Directory; Federal Direct Tax of 1798, Baltimore City, MS.806, MHS (hereafter cited as 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax); 1812 Baltimore Directory; 1812 Baltimore Tax Record; 1819 Baltimore Directory; and Baltimore Property Tax Record, 1818, RG.4 #1, microfilm reel 85, BCA (hereafter cited as 1818 Baltimore Tax Record).

⁴² 1800 Baltimore Directory; 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax; 1819 Baltimore Directory; and 1818 Baltimore Tax Record.

Figure 8-3

Property Distribution for Baltimore Artisans, 1798 and 1812



Sources: *The New Baltimore Directory and Annual Register; for 1800 and 1801* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1800); *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812); Federal Direct Tax of 1798, Baltimore City, MS.807, Maryland Historical Society; and Baltimore City Property Tax Records, 1812 (microfilm), Baltimore City Archives.

Notes: Of the 1,269 artisans listed in the 1800 city directory, 350 were identified in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax record. Of the 871 artisans listed in the 1812 city directory, 178 were identified in the 1812 city property tax record.

they fell below the minimum requirements for taxation. However, there is reason to suspect that working-class families were able to at least hold the line on household income despite a decline of 50 percent in real wages between 1802 and 1814. Working-class women and the wives of laborers were less devoted to the idea of Republican Motherhood, did far less shopping because their households lacked the resources, did not spend more time baking white bread because their households did not have cooking stoves, and were more likely to take on employment doing domestic service.⁴³ If these families were able to maintain their household income, it happened through the efforts of wives extending the scope of housework in response to the changes brought about by early industrialization.

Many rural farm households coped with industrialization better than did most urban households. Farmers responded to the expansion of the backcountry trade by preserving a traditional subsistence-base of production, creating an urban-rural dichotomy in the effects of market expansion. Likewise, farm wives were able to turn the traditional patterns of housework on a farm more to their advantage in the wake of industrialization. Rural households engaged in outwork more frequently than did urban ones, often because many of the earliest manufactories required fast-running streams and were therefore located in the countryside. Because rural households tended to be larger than urban ones, farm wives could also rely on servants and children to do more of the traditional housework. This created the time needed for needlework. Farm households were also more likely to engage in household production. Few urban households owned

⁴³ Boydston, *Home and Work*, 77-93. In poor families, mothers had little time to supervise older children, a prerequisite of Republican Motherhood. See Nancy Cott, "Eighteenth-Century Family and Social Life Revealed in Massachusetts Divorce Records," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976): 28-29.

cows, and fewer still made their own butter. Yet Baltimore's population rocketed from 13,000 in 1790 to 62,000 in 1820, and the growing number of city dwellers provided a ready-made market for farm products. In the early nineteenth century, many mid-Atlantic farm women like Martha Ogle Forman of northern Maryland took advantage of the booming urban market and specialized in the production of butter. In 1816, she sent her first consignment of butter to Baltimore, and a few years later wrote that "we now make more butter than we know what to do with."⁴⁴ Through methods such as these, farmer-husbands and their wives were able to preserve the household economy at a time when urban families saw the traditional order slipping away. The lack of parallel social evolution between the urban and rural areas was thus evident in the lives of both men and women in the cities and on the farms.

TRANSFORMING ETHOS

The prevailing ethos of the household economy fostered customary rights and mutual obligations in which deference was the defining characteristic. Yet this ethos could not survive if the city's beleaguered workshops and households no longer embraced the deferential bonds needed to support it. The demand for ever-greater levels of efficiency and productivity erased any hope of that support, and thus the severe distress of the household economy had a withering effect on Baltimore's traditional social order. Institutions that successfully checked social conflict between artisans and laborers

⁴⁴ W. Emerson Wilson, *Plantation Life at Rose Hill: The Diaries of Martha Ogle Forman, 1814-1845* (Wilmington, DE: Historical Society of Delaware, 1976), 181. For rural outwork, see Boydston, 93-97, and Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 184-91. For the mid-Atlantic butter business, see Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 79-113.

during the 1790s, like the Mechanical Society and the Carpenters' Society, dissolved after 1800. All vestiges of traditional, deferential bonds within the city's workplaces were subsequently wiped away. Political quarrels between the city's mercantile and mechanic interests, which had been settled through discourse during the 1790s, became disputes without resolution after 1800. Baltimore's troubled workshops, once the backbone of traditional society, became centers of working class agitation in the urban transition.⁴⁵

As artisans struggled against the rise of the manufacturers to maintain the independence of their shops, a wave of strikes swept the city in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Journeymen in numerous trades had been denied any wage increases, and many were suffering due to skyrocketing prices for retail goods in the city. The journeymen tailors threatened to strike for higher wages in 1805, and did so in 1808. Journeymen carpenters threatened a strike in 1806, journeymen cordwainers went on strike in 1809 and 1810, and journeymen printers likely went on strike in October 1810. Given the strong objections of republican lawmakers to unions and strikes, the public reaction was predictable. The city's shoemakers formed the United Master Shoemakers to oppose the efforts of the journeymen, and the Baltimore Criminal Court indicted the leaders of the Union Society of Journeymen Cordwainers in 1809 for criminal conspiracy. With few exceptions, all semblance of solidarity within the handicraft trades was gone.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The Mechanical Society dissolved in 1800, and the Carpenter's Society ceased active operations by 1806. Other artisan societies shared similar fates. See Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 172-73, 212.

⁴⁶ Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 209-227.

Artisans also faced challenges from within their own ranks that renewed their struggles with the city's mercantile interests in a new way. During the 1790s, the controversy over the city's charter focused the political attention of artisans and merchants alike. Artisans were not satisfied with the 1797 Charter, and charter reform remained an important issue after 1800. Yet the growth of banks, and their prospective role in shaping the city's economy and society, emerged as the more important concern. During the 1790s, banks had been modeled after the Bank of the United States, focusing on the concerns of the mercantile community and insuring merchant dominance by setting enormously high prices for ownership of bank stock. The banks' exclusivity had been a concern for artisans prior to the Panic of 1797, though not a major one. After the credit crunch at the turn of the century and the miserly behavior of the city's banks during that crisis, however, artisan interest grew quickly for a bank that would cater to the needs of the handicraft community by discounting bank notes offered by artisans. In 1806, a small number of artisans met to draw up articles of incorporation for such a bank.⁴⁷ The problem, which became evident almost immediately, was that the handicraft community was now clearly divided between traditional artisans and the new manufacturers—and the interests of these two groups of handicraft producers were not the same.

A group of artisans calling themselves the Phalanx Society outlined a constitution for the bank that favored the interests of the traditional artisans.⁴⁸ Their vision for the bank appeared in Hezekiah Niles's *Baltimore Evening Post*, and promoted a bank with a

⁴⁷ *Baltimore American*, May 20, 1806.

⁴⁸ The Phalanx Society included Joshua Ennis, Thomas Sheppard, Nathaniel Hynson, Jr., Edward Hagthorp, Thomas Worrell, Thomas Tinker, Hosea Johns, William MConkey, Richard Shipley, Robert Edwards, James Martin, James Potoer, and William Edwards. See *Baltimore Evening Post*, May 19, 1806.

capitalization of one million dollars. Each share of bank stock was priced at \$25, but “no person or persons, bodies corporate or otherwise, shall be permitted to subscribe on the first day . . . for more than 50 shares.” The limit was set to prevent ownership of the bank falling into the hands of a few wealthy stockholders. Regardless of the number of shares a stockowner possessed, the maximum number of votes was set at twenty to insure that artisans remained an important voting block within the bank. The Board of Directors included eighteen directors of whom at least twelve had to be “practical mechanics, artificers or handicraftsmen.” The use of the language is interesting because the Phalanx Society deliberately avoided the using the word *manufacturer*, in essence lumping merchants and manufacturers together as a distinct group apart from “all practical mechanics, artificers, and handicraftsmen, and the middling and poorer classes of the community, not being stockholders.”⁴⁹ The Phalanx Society clearly believed their interests were distinct from those of the manufacturers.

A second group, comprised of manufacturers, drew up an alternative constitution for the prospective bank. Their constitution appeared in Leonard Yundt and Matthew Brown’s *Federal Gazette*, which was not surprising. Until the publication of Alexander Contee Hanson’s *Federal Republican* began in 1808, Yundt and Brown’s *Federal Gazette* was the voice of the Federalist cause in Baltimore. Even though many of Baltimore’s manufacturers were themselves Jeffersonian Republicans, the Federalists had associated themselves with the interests of manufacturers since Hamilton’s advocacy of manufactories in the 1790s. The *Federal Gazette* was therefore an appropriate venue for

⁴⁹ *Baltimore Evening Post*, May 14, 1806.

the manufacturers to outline their vision for the bank.⁵⁰

Like the Phalanx Society's proposal for the bank, the manufacturers' proposal set the bank's capitalization at one million dollars and a share price at \$25. However, the manufacturers' proposal set much higher limits on the number of votes an individual shareholder could have. The Phalanx Society's proposal provided one vote for any number of shares between one and fifty, five votes for those with 50-100 shares, ten votes for 101-150 shares, fifteen votes for 151-200 shares, and twenty votes for those with 200 or more shares. Obviously, the manufacturers' proposal favored wealthier stockholders. In the Phalanx Society's proposal, a stockholder with 49 shares had only one vote, and a stockholder with 99 shares had only five votes. In the manufacturers' version, a stockholder with 49 shares had 14 votes, and one with 99 shares had 21 votes. The manufacturers' proposal also stipulated that nine of the fifteen members on the Board of Directors would be "practical mechanics or manufacturers," thus making handicraft producers an established majority.⁵¹ If just two of the nine members of that established majority were manufacturers, however, they could side with the other six members of the Board and place the remaining seven traditional artisans in the minority. Manufacturers would thus become the swing votes, and by extension, be able to direct the affairs of the

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the political leanings of Baltimore's newspaper editors, see Roxanne Zimmer, "The Urban Daily Press: Baltimore, 1797-1816" (Ph.D., University of Iowa, 1982), 87-122.

⁵¹ *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, May 31, 1806. Voting rights of shareholders appeared in Article V of the Phalanx Society's proposal, printed in *Baltimore Evening Post*, May 14, 1806, and Article II of the manufacturers' proposal, printed in *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, May 31, 1806. The manufacturers' constitution provided that "For one share, and not exceeding two shares, one vote each; for every two shares above two and not exceeding ten, one vote; for every four shares above ten and not exceeding thirty, one vote; for every six shares above thirty and not exceeding sixty, one vote; for every eight shares above sixty and not exceeding one hundred, one vote, and for every ten shares above that number, one vote; but no person or persons, body politic or otherwise, shall be entitled to a greater number than thirty votes."

institution.

The fight over the Mechanic's Bank proved much more bitter than those over the city charter in the late 1790s. In the *Evening Post*, "Anti-Shaver" lashed out against the manufacturers proposed as the Bank's Directors, calling them "*notorious harpies* who prey upon the *very blood of men*" whose "business may be compared to a *sun of iniquity* around which his satellites revolve." When an artisan, or "a person whom this *system of villains* has marked for one of its victims," offers a note, they are either turned down or forced to pay a "heavy *shaving* interest" instead of "a *legal* one." In another piece written for the *Evening Post*, "An Examiner" complained that the interests of artisans were distinct from those of the manufacturers. The former "must assert their own rights and maintain their own interests," for the latter "may find it convenient to their [own] interests to accommodate the rich and add to the oppression of the oppressed." The manufacturers' proposed constitution made no provisions "even for how long a time a man must have been a practical mechanic previous to his election as a director; whether for two years or for two hours . . . or whether a mechanic, who ceased to be a mechanic twenty years ago." Despite the protests, the manufacturers' constitution was adopted.⁵²

The troubles of the household economy encouraged many artisans to quit their failing shops and adopt a new occupation. George Littig is a prime example of this trend. He struggled during the economic downturn after the Panic of 1797 to save his hat shop

⁵² For "An Examiner," see *Baltimore Evening Post*, June 6, 1806. For "Anti-Shaver," see *Baltimore Evening Post*, July 1, 1806. Charles Steffen adds that the year after the adoption of the manufacturers' constitution, the directors began requiring "practical mechanics" to have been at their trade for the three years, and at least one year preceding the election. (Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 201.) By still allowing "manufacturers" to stand for election, however, the directors' actions really amounted to a limitation on the number of "practical mechanics" that qualified for the Board rather than a way of increasing the number of artisans who served on the Board.

on North Gay Street, but when it became clear that revenues were not likely to rebound soon, Littig closed his store and turned to a new line of work. Based on the evidence of his account books, Littig was literate, possessed good communication skills, and demonstrated a penchant for details—the perfect occupational skills for a tax collector. In 1800, he started his new career as a revenue officer for the customs house, working on the docks collecting tariff dues on imported goods. He was evidently rather good at his job, spending the next decade working at the customs house. Unfortunately, Littig's personal financial situation may have deteriorated. His property valuation for the 1798 Direct Tax was \$910, which was double the city's median assessment and placed Littig in the top one-third of all city property owners. In 1812, his assessment was just \$79, or a little more than half the city's median assessment. The assessment also placed Littig in the bottom one-third of all city property owners. Of course, as a tax collector himself, Littig may have been clever enough to liquidate most of his taxable property after 1800 and transfer the bulk of his wealth into bank deposits, stocks, and bonds—assets that remained out of the reach of tax collection in the early nineteenth century. Without detailed lists of depositors and stock holders for the city's various banks, insurance companies, and other corporations, however, it is impossible to determine whether or not Littig outfoxed his fellow tax collectors.⁵³

Littig was not the only artisan to shift from handicraft production to working for government. The beginning of the 1804 city directory listed 62 people working in government positions, not including those serving on the City Council. The occupations for 27 of these people were listed in earlier city directories, and more than 40 percent of

⁵³ 1800 Baltimore Directory; 1798 Baltimore Direct Tax; 1812 Baltimore Tax Record; and 1812 Tax Record.

them had been artisans.⁵⁴ For some, the move to government service was very natural. Samuel Davis, Christian Slimmer, and George Hall had all been carpenters before becoming Inspectors of Lumber. For others the change was more abrupt. Frederick Sumwalt, a blacksmith, became the Superintendent of Pumps for the Western District. Thomas Roberts, a cordwainer, became one of two Commissioners of the Streets, and Alexandre Russell, a calico printer, became a wood corder. Artisans were especially well-suited for these jobs. Most had to keep account books at their shops, and were therefore prepared to do the bookkeeping required in these positions. As artisans, they had interacted with the public on a regular basis, and were therefore known, and in most cases, already trusted members of the community. Government positions were limited, but many other artisans took similar jobs in the business community as accountants, clerks, and bookkeepers. The rise of the manufacturers and the consolidation of wealth among merchants provided a growing market for those able to keep a proper account

⁵⁴ There were actually 63 government positions listed in the front of the 1804 Baltimore city directory, including the Harbor Master, the Clerks of the Markets, the Superintendents of the Pumps, Powder Magazine, and Chimney Sweeps, the Commissioners of the Streets, the Inspectors of the revenue, flour, butter and lard, staves and headings, salted provisions, and lumber, the Custom House officers, the constables, the hay weighers, and the wood corders. Peregrine G. Browning served as both a constable and as the Clerk of Hanover Street Market, thus only 62 people were cross-referenced against the 1799, 1800, and 1802 city directories. This yielded 48 matches, and of these, 21 were listed in the same government position they held in 1804. For example, John Johnson, one of the two Superintendents of [Chimney] Sweeps, appeared in the 1802 directory as a master of sweeps. He did not have a specified trade in the 1799 directory, and he did not appear at all in the 1800 directory. Others like George Matthews, the Inspector of Salted Provisions, appeared in all 4 directories with the same government job. The previous occupations of the remaining 27 people included 11 artisans, 6 merchants, 5 grocers, 3 innkeepers, one clerk, and one sea captain. See John Mullin, *The Baltimore Directory, for 1799* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1799), hereafter cited as 1799 Baltimore Directory; 1800 Baltimore Directory; Cornelius William Stafford, *The Baltimore Directory, for 1802* (Baltimore: John W. Butler, 1802), hereafter cited as 1802 Baltimore Directory; and James Robinson, *Baltimore Directory, for 1804* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1804), hereafter cited as 1804 Baltimore Directory.

book.⁵⁵

Other artisans joined the ranks of the wage earners, but it is difficult to determine how many took this path. City directories did not provide comprehensive listings of the city's laborers, and the laborers who did appear were typically employed as riggers, carters, draymen, brick layers, or other specific occupations. Very few were listed with the ubiquitous designation "laborer," thus relatively few of the laborers who worked in the city's shops and manufactories ever appeared in the directories. The available evidence, which can only paint a blurry picture of the shift from handicraft production to wage labor, suggests that relatively few artisans made the transition to wage labor in the early nineteenth century.

Of the 109 people designated as "laborers" in the 1802 city directory, only 22 previously appeared in either the 1799 or 1800 directories. Nine of the identified laborers, or 41 percent, had been artisans, but the small number of matches between the directories (20 percent) challenges the reliability of that statistic. Among other wage earners, the percentage of former artisans was markedly lower. Of the 209 riggers, draymen, seamen, caulkers, carters, porters, stevedores, stage drivers, and bricklayers in the 1802 city directory, 81 previously appeared in the 1799 or 1800 city directories. Of these, 49 had been wage earners, usually in the same occupation. Only 11, or just 13½ percent, had been artisans.⁵⁶ Thus the available evidence suggests that artisans and wage

⁵⁵ 1799 Baltimore Directory; 1800 Baltimore Directory; and 1802 Baltimore Directory. Similar changes occurred in Utica, New York where the number of clerks rose by more than 13,500 percent between 1817 and 1860. See Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Table B-4.

⁵⁶ 1799 Baltimore Directory; 1800 Baltimore Directory; and 1802 Baltimore Directory.

earners occupied two different levels of Baltimore's social strata, and that relatively few individuals crossed over from one side to the other. A minority of the city's artisans joined the ranks of the wage earners, and ex-artisans represented only a small percentage of the city's working class. The bulk of the city's laborers did not emerge from the ranks of the handicraft producers, and artisans did not endure what one historian called "the irreversible proletarianization of the mechanic class."⁵⁷ Instead, newly arrived immigrants, housewives, and those who had been apprenticed, indentured, or enslaved were the most important segments of the urban population making the transition to wage labor.

Despite all the troubles of the household economy, most of the city's artisans clung to their traditional way of life in the hope of recapturing their earlier economic independence. Their shops were becoming an increasingly marginal part of the urban economy, but as late as 1819, artisans still represented more than 35 percent of all the occupations listed in the city directory. George Lightner, who continued to ply his trade

⁵⁷ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25. The theory that the "proletarianization" of artisans led to the rise of the American working class is also advanced in Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Origins of the American Working Class," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 19 (1981): 1-22, and Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989). Recent scholarship on the working poor has helped debunk the "proletarianization" thesis by stressing the differences between the experiences of artisans and unskilled laborers. See especially Billy Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Rockman, "Working for Wages," 15-30; and Jacqueline Jones, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 255-58. Scholars focusing on women's history and African American history have also helped debunk the "proletarianization" thesis by pointing to the importance of female and African American wage earners in early industrialization. See especially Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Leslie Harris, "Creating the African-American Working Class: Black and White Workers, Abolitionists and Reformers in New York City, 1785-1863" (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1994); Jeanne Boydston, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Women's Market Labor and the Transition to Capitalism in the United States," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 16 (1996): 183-206; and Sonya Rose, "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker," in John Hall, ed.,

as a tinsmith into the 1820s, was among them.⁵⁸

For many artisans, the decision to fight back or to quit their businesses was only a partial answer to the distresses they faced. With the prevailing ethos of traditional society vanishing quickly in the early nineteenth century, many Baltimoreans turned to religion to fill the void, and were subsequently swept up in the Second Great Awakening. This was not the first, nor was it the last religious awakening in America. As William McLoughlin argued, religious revivals have occurred whenever traditional social patterns deviated so far from their accepted norms that the society's prevailing ethos was no longer intelligible. What represented the ideal was so far removed from the reality of people's lives that individuals in that society were no longer able to sustain a common understanding of what constituted reasonable social, political, or economic behavior. In such times, revivals provide a way for those with a religious leaning to accommodate the radical social changes sweeping society. Artisans and workers, who relied heavily on religion as a source of moral legitimacy, were thus especially susceptible to revivalism in times of extreme distress.⁵⁹ Between the troubled workshops and beleaguered

Reworking Class (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 133-66.

⁵⁸ 1819 Baltimore Directory. Two excellent case studies of artisans struggling to retain their economic independence are Gary Kornblith, "Becoming Joseph T. Buckingham: The Struggle for Artisanal Independence in Early-Nineteenth-Century Boston," and William Pretzer, "From Artisan to Alderman: The Career of William W. Moore, 1803-1886," in Rock, Gilje, and Asher, eds., *American Artisans*, 123-34, 135-52.

⁵⁹ William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 12-23. McLoughlin builds his argument based on the anthropological methodologies developed in Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropology*, 58 (1956): 264-81, and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), chapters 4-5. As Geertz himself pointed out, however, the true starting point for connecting social distress to religious revivalism is really Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950; orig. 1938). On the historic connection between artisans and religion, see Herbert Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the

households, the early nineteenth century was such a time.

The Second Great Awakening embodied numerous evangelical traditions, and offered no single religious agenda. Instead, the awakening defined a period in which revivalism spread slowly through the United States and evolved over time and space. During the early 1790s, Methodist and Free-Will Baptist itinerants swept through backcountry Kentucky and Tennessee organizing massive camp meetings and establishing churches. When the revival spread to New England in the late 1790s, however, most conservative yankees rejected the camp meeting as overly enthusiastic. Some, like Timothy Dwight, the President of Yale College, even fought a rear-guard action against revivalism and tried to reinvigorate the older Calvinist agenda. The revivalists in New England were not as interested in establishing new churches as they were in changing the old. When the Second Great Awakening came to Baltimore, the leaders of the revival in Maryland's largest city embraced the massive camp meetings and revivalism of the frontier, and shared the New England revivalists' interest in evangelizing the community as a whole.⁶⁰

On September 24, 1803, the Methodist Episcopal Baltimore Annual Conference conducted a massive camp meeting fifteen miles northwest of the city on the Reister's

Gilded Age," *American Historical Review* 72 (1966): 74-101; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), esp. chapters 1-3; and Ronald Schultz, "God and Workingmen: Popular Religion and the Formation of Philadelphia's Working Class, 1790-1830," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert, eds., *Religion in a Revolutionary Age* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 125-55.

⁶⁰ On the varied nature of the Second Great Awakening, see Charles Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), 3-55; John Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1895* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972); and McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98-140.

Town Road. The meeting, which lasted three days, did not introduce Methodism to Baltimore. In 1784, Francis Asbury broke with the Church of England and formed the American Episcopal Methodist Church in Baltimore. Asbury became the church's first bishop actively participated in the later revival. By 1800, Methodists were already Baltimore's largest Protestant denomination, representing about 20 percent of city's Protestants. Instead, the camp meeting on Reister's Town Road helped ignite religious enthusiasm in Baltimore, inspiring the converted to conduct their own town meetings, or smaller versions of the camp meeting, when they returned to the city. A second massive camp meeting in October 1806 produced more than 500 conversions according to one observer. The repeated camp meetings helped keep the fires of religious enthusiasm burning and sustained a period of revivalism that lasted for much of the decade. The revival helped the Methodists attract greater numbers of Baltimoreans to their churches. By 1810, there were approximately 4,500 Methodists in Baltimore, or nearly a third of all the city's Protestants.⁶¹

The Methodists advanced the ideas of free will and universal salvation, and stressed the importance of evangelizing all parts of the community. Anyone could be saved simply by committing themselves wholly to Christ. By the 1830s, revivalists like Charles Finney of New York and Lyman Beecher of Boston had transformed the idea of universal salvation into a rationale for universal moral reform, and recast evangelical Protestantism as the religion of the emerging middle class. This represented the final stage of the revival. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the revival was a powerful

⁶¹ Terry Bilhartz, *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening: Church and Society in Early National Baltimore* (East Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 85-94, 157.

organizing force for working people and artisans.⁶²

In Baltimore, Protestant artisans and laborers gravitated to the Methodists and Baptists (although the latter never amounted to more than 4 percent of the city's Protestants). Baltimore's Presbyterians warmed to the idea of employing revivalist strategies to boost church attendance, but never fully embraced the revival. As a result, Presbyterians stagnated as a percentage of Baltimore's churchgoing population. The city's Episcopalians rejected the Methodists' enthusiastic approach. James Bend, the rector of Baltimore's St. Paul's Episcopal Church, found it bewildering how a Methodist "cannot think it compatible with Christian duty to give up ranting, noise, and other follies." Methodists, Baptists, and other revivalists paid little attention to such complaints. By 1830, Methodists outnumbered Episcopalians in Baltimore by more than two to one.⁶³

The troubled workshops and beleaguered households of early national Baltimore demonstrate how the rise of the manufacturers eventually undermined the household economy. The political tussles between artisans, laborers, and manufacturers, the shifts in Baltimore's occupational structure, and the rise of Methodism in the city are all illustrative that a change in ethos occurred. Yet none of these examples provides an

⁶² The idea of stages to the awakening is outlined in Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 264-81. For the connection between early artisanal and labor activism and evangelical Protestantism, see Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 3-17, 26-34, 130-150, and Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 253-75. For the connection between evangelical Protestantism and middle-class moralism, see Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 4-8, 95-136; Cross, *The Burned-Over District*, 211-38; and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 66-67.

⁶³ Bend quoted in Francis Beirne, *St. Paul's Parish: A Chronicle of the Mother Church* (Baltimore: Horn-Shafer, 1967), 54-55. For the distribution of church attendance by occupational group in Baltimore, see Bilhartz, *Urban Religion*, 158-160.

opportunity to peer into the *mentalité* of the city and evaluate how far the market revolution had, in Paul's Gilje's words, "crept into the consciousness" of Americans.⁶⁴ To what extent did the old ethos of deference and mutual obligation yield to a new ethos guided by market sensibilities? In the long, violent summer of 1812, the answer to that question began to take shape.

⁶⁴ Paul Gilje, "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic," in Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence*, 2.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BALTIMORE RIOTS

Through the grating of his prison cell, John Thompson could see the rioters swing their hatchets against the door of the cell opposite his. As they hacked through the wooden barrier, John Hall, another witness to the scene, remembered Thompson calling out it is “a pity they should kill those poor devils instead of us . . . you are at the wrong door—here we are.” The taunt worked, and the rioters’ fury quickly turned toward Thompson’s and Hall’s cell. Once the rioters were through the door, however, they were surprised to see Captain Daniel Murray inside, brandishing a gun at their heads. Hall recalled Murray’s warning: “my lads, you had better retire; [otherwise] we shall shoot some of you.” For what seemed an interminable moment, the shadows of the rioters’ hatchets and Murray’s pistol danced silently on the wall as both sides glared at each other. When Thompson and Murray finally rushed the door, blood soon choked the city’s streets.¹

By 10 o’clock on the evening of July 28, 1812, a dozen people were dead and many others wounded in the worst riot that Baltimore or any other city in the republic had

¹ Narrative of John Hall, *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812. The Baltimore Riots of 1812 have received extensive treatment from historians. See especially Grace Overmyer, “The Baltimore Mobs and John Howard Payne,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 58 (1963): 54-61; Frank Cassell, “The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 70 (1975): 241-59; Donald Hickey, “The Darker Side of Democracy: The Baltimore Riots of 1812,” *Maryland Historian*, 7 (1976): 1-20; Paul Gilje, “The Baltimore Riots of 1812 and the Breakdown of the Anglo-American Mob Tradition,” *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1980): 547-64; Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 243-50; Paul Gilje, “‘Le Menu Peuple’ in America: Identifying the Mob in the Baltimore Riots of 1812,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 81 (1986): 50-66; Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 56-71; and Paul Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 60-63.

ever witnessed. The mob's brutality astounded the American public, which was not accustomed to the idea of a large number of people being killed during a riot. This expectation may seem remarkable to twenty-first-century sensibilities, which remain haunted by the barbarous images of the twentieth century's deadly riots. In 1917, 48 people died in the riot in East St. Louis. In 1965, the arrest of an African American motorist in the Watts section of Los Angeles led to six days of rioting and the deaths of 34 people. In the long summer of 1967, 68 people died in riots in Detroit and Newark alone. The idea of a peaceful and orderly riot thus seems a contradiction. Yet in the eighteenth-century, riots typically involved small, disciplined groups that advanced recognizable political agendas by humiliating an individual, destroying symbols, or demolishing property. Injuries were common, but few people died.² In a typical mob action, rascals were burned in effigy, or were themselves tarred and feathered. Yet no eighteenth-century mob ever decided to tar and feather someone and then set the actual person ablaze—as was the case with John Thompson outside the Baltimore City Jail.

Several historians have described the more orderly riots of the eighteenth-century as part of the "Anglo-American mob tradition." This type of rioting had a long history on both sides of the Atlantic.³ In America, the march of Pennsylvania's Paxton Boys in

² Paul Gilje has calculated that for the entire period between 1701 and 1765, only 19 people died in riots throughout America. Gilje's figures exclude the 20 Indians murdered by the Paxton Boys in 1763. See Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 25. For the 1917 and 1967 riots, see *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, intro. Tom Wicker (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 115, 162, 217. This report was the product of a special commission created by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 29, 1967 to investigate the reasons for recent deadly riots in American cities. The commission was headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, and thus the media dubbed the commission's findings as the "Kerner Report."

³ My understanding of the "eighteenth-century Anglo-American mob tradition" is based in part on Max Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbance, 1660-1714* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964); Gordon Wood, "A Note on the Mobs in the

1764, the destruction of Governor Thomas Hutchinson's house in Boston in 1765, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, and the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* in Annapolis in 1774 were all examples of this mob tradition. Riots of this type never achieved complete political legitimacy in America, but their ritualized nature inspired relatively little fear. Thomas Hutchinson, himself a victim of a riot, once commented that riots do not seem to "strike the mind with so much abhorrence as some other offenses do."⁴

Eighteenth-century authorities lacked the use of organized police forces, thus crowd control relied on the mob's recognition of a deferential social order. When officials confronted a mob, either the mayor, the magistrates, or the constables addressed the rioters directly, literally reading the Riot Act them. By actually reading the act, officials were able to use their personal prestige and position to convince the mob to

American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 23 (1966): 635-42; Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 25 (1968): 371-407; Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth Century America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 27 (1970): 3-35; E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," *Past and Present*, 51 (1971): 76-136; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972), 3-48; E.P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974); Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 3-95; Thomas Slaughter, "Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 115 (1991): 3-34; and Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 1-60.

⁴ Hutchinson quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 84-85. The best account of the Paxton Boys may be found in George Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry* (New York: Garland, 1989). The Paxton Boys did murder twenty Conestoga Indians in 1763, but this presaged their march on Philadelphia in 1764. Upon reaching the outskirts of the city, the mob met with Benjamin Franklin, Mayor Thomas Willing, and Attorney General Benjamin Chew, and agreed to seek proper legal redress for their grievances. For a discussion of the destruction of Thomas Hutchinson's house, see Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 35-38. For the Boston Tea Party, see Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 42-45. For an account of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*, see Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 133-38.

disperse. Eighteenth-century artisans and journeymen respected the traditional social hierarchy and usually responded to these demands. As long as the riot remained orderly, however, most officials provided enough time for the mob to finish tearing down a building or burning someone in effigy. In England, mobs had the tacit approval to continue their activities for more than an hour after the Riot Act was read. In America, mobs were usually allowed to finish their work and disperse quietly without interference from the mayor, the magistrates, or the militia.⁵

If rioters either refused to disperse or became disorderly, the mayor could call upon the militia for help. This last option was used sparingly because the militia could not always be relied upon to muster. Even when the militia did muster, officials often found it difficult to convince them to use force against members of their own community. When the militia agreed to fight, the use of force threatened what E.P. Thompson called the “credibility of the gentry and magistracy.” The “reassertion of paternalistic authority” thus remained the preferred means of controlling an eighteenth-century mob.⁶

The gruesome events at the Baltimore City Jail demonstrated that the corporatism which defined eighteenth-century rioters and riot control had been indeed been swept away. Although the immediate catalyst for the riot at the Jail was the preceding five weeks of civil disturbances in the city, and a melee the previous day on Charles Street the previous day, the cause of the unprecedented violence was the long-term reconstruction of the city’s traditional social order. The rise of the manufacturers had already compelled artisans to make far-reaching changes in workshops throughout the city, fundamentally

⁵ Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances*, 136-37, and Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 20-24.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, “Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture,” 404.

undermining the household economy. The seeds of conflict lurked in the shadows of Baltimore's alleys, and the mob only required an excuse for chaos to burst onto the city streets. The riots help reveal the fault lines in the city's social structure, providing an opportunity to peer into the *mentalité* of the city whereby the often blurry contours of Baltimore's long-term social reconstruction become clearer. By analyzing the rioters' actions and those of the authorities who tried, sometimes half-heartedly, to stop the violence, as well as the commentaries of witnesses to the violence and those who later condemned it, an answer begins to take shape to the most elusive question: to what the extent had the market revolution "crept into the consciousness" of Americans in the early republic?⁷

THE FEDERAL HILL RIOT OF 1807

As late as 1807, the Anglo-American mob tradition and traditional methods of crowd control continued to function in Baltimore as they had during the eighteenth century. This is evident from the conduct of the mob during a riot on Federal Hill that year. The *Chesapeake-Leopard* incident had united most Baltimoreans behind the Jefferson administration. Two days after the attack on the American warship, a town meeting of more than 3,000 people condemned the British outrage. Militia units began mustering and war had become an acceptable policy. Any treasonable activity risked the vengeance of the mob, and in the midst of this charged political atmosphere, Aaron Burr, who was already under indictment in New York and New Jersey for the murder of

⁷ The question was posed by Paul Gilje in "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic," in Paul Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison: Madison House, 1997), 1-2.

Alexander Hamilton, was indicted for treason against the United States. Burr had allegedly plotted with General James Wilkinson, the military governor of the Louisiana Territory, to establish Louisiana as a separate nation. Wilkinson then betrayed Burr, arresting the former Vice President for leading an armed force down the Ohio River. Although Burr was a Republican, two of Baltimore's leading Federalists, Robert Goodloe Harper and Luther Martin, agreed to defend him against the charge. Chief Justice John Marshall presided over the trial in Richmond, Virginia. After Harper and Martin won Burr's acquittal, however, the Baltimore mob waited patiently for the lawyers' return to the city.⁸

In late October, Martin returned home, accompanied by Aaron Burr himself. Republican frustrations with the jurists' audacity surfaced quickly. On November 2, Captain Leonard Frailey marched the Patriot's Volunteer company to Martin's house on Charles Street where they played the rogues' march as they passed by. On November 3, the Republican newspaper *Whig* printed "An Earnest Proposal," calling upon "the young men of Baltimore" to "confer a mark of distinction" on Martin "with a suit of tar and feathers." Baltimore's mayor, Thorowgood Smith, himself a Federalist, worried about the mob's intent. That afternoon he took the unusual step of assembling his constables and asking General John Stricker to assemble the militia's cavalry. Captains Samuel Hollingsworth and William Barney, the son of the naval hero, Joshua Barney, agreed to assemble their men, but Captain James Biays of the Fell's Point Troop of Light Dragoons

⁸ Aaron Burr is second only to Benedict Arnold in the rogues' gallery of the founding fathers, but a number of historians have recently sought to rescue the reputation of the Third Vice-President, particularly on the questions of Burr's duel with Hamilton and his alleged treason in 1807. See especially Arnold Rogow, *A Fatal Friendship: Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), and Roger Kennedy, *Burr, Hamilton, and Jefferson: A Study in Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

believed that “no mischief would be done by the people,” and refused to assemble his men.⁹

By late afternoon, a mob had gathered at Fells Point and began parading effigies of Martin and Burr on carts, north through Old Town and then west to Jones Falls. Smith’s constables were unable to stop the mob from crossing Jones Falls into Baltimore Town, and because the mob had officially defied public authority, at this point the parade became a riot. Yet Smith was reluctant to order the cavalry to intervene because the procession continued in an orderly manner without incident. Hoping that Biays would carry political favor with the mob because of his refusal to muster, Smith convinced him to try and lead the procession away from Luther Martin’s house. Biays agreed and successfully led the mob around the Basin to Federal Hill where the effigies of Martin and Burr were finally set ablaze.¹⁰

The procession from Fells Point and the reaction of the local government on November 3 provided a near-textbook example of a traditional eighteenth-century American riot. Biays’s personal ability to take command over the rioters were clear signs that the Anglo-American mob tradition had survived into the nineteenth century. Although *The Whig* had urged Baltimore’s young men to tar and feather Luther Martin, the mob opted instead to burn him in effigy. A symbol, rather than a person, was therefore the target of the mob’s vengeance. When confronted by the constables at Jones Falls, the mob ignored the order not to cross into Baltimore Town, but remained peaceful.

⁹ *Baltimore American*, November 19, 1807; *Baltimore Whig*, November 3, 1807; and *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, November 4, 1807.

¹⁰ Part of the mob actually turned down Charles Street, and coming to Martin’s house, began throwing rocks at it. Biays doubled back, however, and was able to convince the crowd to rejoin the rest of the procession. See Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 232-34.

Mayor Smith considered using the militia, but in a fashion typical to eighteenth-century crowd control, opted instead to use the mob's deference for James Biays as a means of containment. The mob reacted positively to Biays's position, indicating their recognition of the prevailing social order, and the subsequent bonfire recalled the Boston tradition of parading and then burning effigies of the Pope on November 5—appropriately just two days after the Baltimore mob had paraded the effigies of Martin and Burr from Fells Point to Federal Hill. Despite the economic upheaval, the urban transition had not yet transformed the city's traditional, deferential social order. The continued pressure of manufactories on workshops, and the renewed commercial frustrations following the Embargo of 1807 accelerated the breakdown of the household economy. The city's deferential social order, which was intimately linked to the household economy, was therefore being slowly undermined, and by 1812, Baltimore was poised for a major conflagration.

THE RIOTS OF 1812

In the wake of the 1807 Federal Hill riot, Alexander Contee Hanson, a young Federalist zealot, established the *Federalist Republican*. Hanson's newspaper specialized in character assassinations and the shrillest Federalist rhetoric, and won the immediate disdain and resentment of the city's Republican majority. A harbinger of the troubles ahead occurred in 1809 when the Republican-dominated Baltimore militia sought to court martial Hanson, then a lieutenant in a volunteer company, for one of his rancorous editorials. The effort failed in court, but the incident demonstrated that the upstart Federalist publisher had already worn down much of the patience of Baltimore's

leadership just two years after his arrival in the city.¹¹

The brewing animosities between Republicans and Hanson bubbled over after Congress declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The declaration of war was not a unanimous vote, and the split in the Congress reflected the disunity of the American nation. Nowhere was this disunity more evident than in Maryland, where the Congressional delegation split by a margin of six to three. In Harford County, in northern Maryland, government authorities could not accommodate all those who wished to join the militia and the army. A new regular army unit commanded by Colonel William Winder, and funded in part by Baltimore Republicans, needed to be created.¹² In Montgomery County, in southern Maryland, the public greeted the declaration of war as a menacing and foolhardy decision. Hanson was one of the most outspoken of Montgomery County's critics.

On June 20, two days after Congress declared war, the *Federalist Republican* publicly condemned the action, calling it "unnecessary," "inexpedient," and showing the "marks of undisguised foreign influence." Hanson declared that "we will never breath under the dominion direct or derivative of Bonaparte."¹³ Federalists had been claiming for months that the movement towards war was the work of Irish immigrants and Napoleon Bonaparte, who were together trying to drag the United States into conflict with the British to serve their own ends. Federalists frequently criticized President James Madison as a "dupe" to Napoleon. Many Republicans at Fells Point wanted to make an

¹¹ *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser*, February 2, 1809.

¹² Joseph Whitehorne, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814* (Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1997), 16.

¹³ *Baltimore Federalist Republican*, June 20, 1812.

example out of Jacob Wagner, Alexander Hanson's partner. A crowd of several hundred met at Myer's Gardens, and discussed plans to clothe Wagner in a terrapin shell, sheep skins, and a pair of horns. The use of the terrapin shell indicates the traditional nature in which the 1812 riots began. Maryland had strict laws against tar and feathering people, and the mob's avoidance of these tactics demonstrates their intent to conduct extralegal, though not necessarily criminal, actions.¹⁴ These plans soon changed, however, and the mob decided instead to tear down the house on Gay Street where the *Federalist Republican* was published.

Instead of acting immediately against the Gay Street property, the mob waited two more days, until the evening of June 22, 1812. Although it may be coincidental, this date marked the fifth anniversary of the *Chesapeake* incident in 1807. That the mob waited until the anniversary suggests an overt political agenda in keeping with the Anglo-American mob tradition. The subsequent behavior of the mob clearly reveals the persistence of that tradition in the early evening of June 22, when a group of laborers and young mechanics gathered outside the Gay Street property. A few witnesses to the riot later referred to as "boys," implying that they were young teenagers or even younger. Yet in their depositions to the special commission set up by Maryland's House of Delegates, John Diffenderfer claimed to have seen no boys present on Gay Street, and William Barney and Samuel Hollingsworth claimed that the early rioters were mostly

¹⁴ Deposition of William Gwynn, in *Report of the Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates of Maryland, on the Subject of the Recent Riot in the City of Baltimore* (Annapolis: Jones Green, 1813), 22. Hereafter, citations of depositions from the report of the Committee of Grievances will be abbreviated as *RCG* and followed by the page number. This citation would appear as "Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 22." Also see Deposition of Thomas Kell, *RCG*, 138; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 174; and Deposition of John Owen, *RCG*, 292-96. On the symbolism of the rioters' behavior, see Gilje, "The Baltimore Riots of 1812," 560 n.19.

comprised of laborers and young mechanics. Taking into consideration the subsequent orderly behavior of the mob, the latter observations provide the most plausible explanation of the rioters' identities.¹⁵

The attack on the property "commenced before dark," with the mob "throwing stones at the house." Captains James and Samuel Sterrett's militia "had sufficient influence" over the rioters "to drive them off, and induce the men to withdraw," but the mob soon reassembled with greater numbers and purpose.¹⁶ Just after dark, the mob began pulling down the house. According to William Gwynn, a prominent Federalist publisher who assumed ownership of Baltimore's *Federal Gazette* the following year, "the work of the destruction [was] performed with great regularity and but little noise." Gwynn described the work as being ritualistic, with approximately thirty to fifty rioters "constantly employed in destroying the property," and another three to five hundred spectators "in the street near the office" who did nothing to aid the local authorities in stopping the riot.¹⁷

Mayor Edward Johnson soon arrived on the scene, and according to Charles Burrall, the Federalist postmaster in Baltimore, "pressed forward into the crowd,

¹⁵ Deposition of James Hutton, *RCG*, 147; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 163; Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 199; Deposition of John Diffenderfer, *RCG*, 222; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 253; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 336.

¹⁶ Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 185; Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 199; and Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 202.

¹⁷ Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 21. Although one witness claimed that a thousand spectators were in the streets, Gwynn's estimates represent a consensus in the testimonies provided to the committee, and may be taken as accurate. See Deposition of David Geddes, *RCG*, 50; Deposition of James Biays, Jr., *RCG*, 144; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 185; Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 202; Deposition of George Steuart, *RCG*, 214; Deposition of John Diffenderfer, *RCG*, 222; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, *RCG*, 223; Deposition of John Owen, *RCG*, 292; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 335-36.

remonstrating against their conduct.”¹⁸ The mayor was quickly rebuffed by one of the rioters, who said, “Mr. Johnson, I know you very well, no body wants to hurt you; but the laws of the land must sleep, and the laws of nature and reason prevail; that house is a Temple of Infamy, it is supported with English gold, and it must and shall come down to the ground!”¹⁹ The workmanlike conduct of the demolition, and the exchange with the mayor underscored the guiding force of the Anglo-American mob tradition in this earliest stage of the riot. The rioter knew the mayor, and despite a veiled threat, treated him with respect. That the rioters refused to stop their activities immediately should not be taken as a lack of deference, because rioters on both sides of the Atlantic expected officials to allow a riot to continue for a short period as long as the activities of the rioters remained orderly.

The composition of the mob during the early evening also highlighted the Anglo-American mob tradition. Although a few immigrants, most notably the French druggist Philip Lewis, and a number of individuals from outside the city were among the most boisterous rioters, the majority of the mob were natives of the city. Only one witness, Samuel Sterrett, believed that immigrants and outsiders represented the majority of the mob, and he made his claim on the basis of overheard dialects, not direct identification. Seven other witnesses, including several Federalists, professed to have some idea of the composition of the mob, and all of them stated that there was a mix of immigrants and native-born Americans, or that the native Baltimoreans outnumbered all others.

¹⁸ Deposition of Charles Burrall, *RCG*, 153. Judge John Scott also made a half-hearted attempt to stop the riot. See Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 119-20.

¹⁹ Deposition of John Worthington, *RCG*, 242. The story is confirmed in Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 160-61; Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 199; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 336, 344-45.

According to William Gwynn, “many of them, from their dress, appeared to be of the middle class of society.”²⁰ Paul Gilje identified fifteen of the rioters in the dockets of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and Gilje’s analysis lends weight to the accuracy of Gwynn’s observation over Sterett’s. At least nine of the fifteen leaders could be considered mechanics or retailers. These rioters likely represented the leadership of the mob at Gay Street. Six of the fifteen appeared in 1813 tax record and averaged \$427 in assessed property, and their residential distribution placed four in Old Town, three in Baltimore Town, two in Fell’s Point, and one from Annapolis, Maryland. The strong percentage of natives among the rioters, as well as numerous mechanics, shopkeepers, and grocers, and people from the center of the city provides very strong evidence that politics alone motivated this mob.²¹

By midnight on June 22, the mob finished the demolition of Wagner’s house on Gay Street and most of the rioters dispersed. In the Anglo-American mob tradition, the rioting should have ended at this point, but in the early morning hours of June 23, parts of the mob scattered throughout the city, continuing the violence. Throughout the night, rioters claimed to be searching for Jacob Wagner, the co-publisher of *Federal*

²⁰ Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 202. For those who did not believe that immigrants represented a majority of the rioters, see Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 21; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 185; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, *RCG*, 223; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 253; Deposition of John Owen, *RCG*, 292; Deposition of Christopher Raborg, *RCG*, 322; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 336.

²¹ Gilje assumed that those identified in the court dockets represented an accurate cross section of the mob. With fifteen of the thirty to fifty rioters appearing in the court records, this is a probably a safe assumption for this particular riot. In later the later riots that summer, however, those charged with a crime represent such a small percentage of the rioters involved, that it is safer to assume that the court dockets represent an accurate cross section of the mob’s leadership only. Gilje also assumed that all those charged in the Court of Oyer and Terminer actually participated in the riot whether or not they were eventually convicted of a crime. See Gilje, “‘Le Menu Peuple’,” 53, 57, 65 n.39.

Republican. This ostensibly political reason suggests that a consistent anti-Federalism continued to guide the mob's actions. Wagner's brother-in-law, Christopher Raborg, feared that violence against the family might occur that night. He arrived at Wagner's father's house in time to see a group of rioters demand to search the property. Raborg testified that there had been a "mixture of foreigners and natives among the rioters" on Gay Street, indicating that he was not predisposed to believing all rioters were immigrants. Yet he was certain that the leader who demanded entrance to Wagner's father's house was "from his appearance and dialect . . . a new imported Irishman." Between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, this Irishman finally gained entrance to Wagner's father's house, and being satisfied that Jacob Wagner was not inside, departed without making further trouble.²²

Towards midnight, Robert McClellan, a shoemaker, warned Captain James Sterrett that some members of "the mob intended to attack the bank" on Second Street in downtown Baltimore "after they had destroyed the office" of the *Federal Republican*. The information proved correct, and just after midnight, a mob assembled outside the bank on the pretense that they believed Wagner to be hiding inside. Through the efforts of Andrew Boyd and Doctor John Owen, who "addressed the mob," and "induced them, after some time, to withdraw," the property was saved.²³

Despite the incidents at Wagner's father's house and the bank, most rioters were not really interested in finding Wagner, and a consistent anti-Federalism was not in evidence during the early morning hours of June 23. Charles Burrall saw "a considerable

²² Deposition of Christopher Raborg, *RCG*, 322-23.

²³ Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 199.

number of people march up St. Paul's Lane," and halt "opposite the office of the *Federal Gazette*," Baltimore's moderate Federalist newspaper. Burrall heard that "the word was given to attack," but others among the mob "called out no, no!" The mob subsequently abandoned the idea of demolishing the property and Burrall heard no more from them that night.²⁴ Yet a man named Prior on Fish Street was harassed by the mob, allegedly for having a sign on his business with the words "From London." William Gwynn believed, however, "that the private animosity of some of his neighbors had induced them to excite the mob to attack."²⁵ Another part of the mob also dismantled a brig in the harbor that night, allegedly because it contained cargo destined for the Duke of Wellington's army in Spain.²⁶ Rioters articulated political reasons for the attempted raid a bank, the assault on a shopkeeper, and the destruction of shipping on Baltimore's wharves. Yet when the mob had the opportunity to act against a target for purely political reasons, as in the case of the threat to the *Federal Gazette*, they did not act.

When politics was a contributing factor to violence, it was rooted in ethnic and religious antagonisms rather than anti-Federalism. Parts of the mob attempted to tar and feather several persons, among them Alexander Wiley, who, according to James Sterrett, "who was twice forced to leave his residence in Gay Street" that night.²⁷ Samuel Sterrett added that the mob claimed Wiley had assisted the editors of the *Federal Republican*, "which was not true, and this being explained to them particularly by the gentleman who employed Wiley," they initially dispersed. The mob regrouped later that night, however,

²⁴ Deposition of Charles Burrall, *RCG*, 154.

²⁵ Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 22.

²⁶ Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 120.

and attacked Wiley anyway, demonstrating that the alleged connection between Wiley and the Federalists was earlier used as a mask for the mob's real motivation. James Sterrett testified that the mob which attacked Wiley was "principally composed of Irishmen who were after him," which suggests that the assault was actually rooted in ethnic and political antagonisms among the Irish.²⁸

The disintegration of the mob into small, chaotic, and violent pieces accelerated the following day. The homes and property of Robert Goodloe Harper and John Oliver were rumored to be threatened, and the homes of Charles Smith and James Heath were violated by the mob. A house on Federal Hill was pulled down, and rumors surfaced during the afternoon that a mob would attack the home of a Mr. Hutchins in Old Town for comments he made about George Washington. Allegedly, Hutchins had offered a toast in which he proclaimed "Damnation to the memory of Washington and all who espouse his cause."²⁹ The mob supposedly reacted to this toast as a pro-Federalist statement against the declaration of war, but for Baltimore's Republicans to have jumped to such a conclusion is not credible. Generally, Republicans would have been more likely to recognize an anti-Federalist message in a toast condemning Washington's memory, because the Federalists venerated Washington as a symbol of an "Augustan age" lost in the Jeffersonian ascendancy.³⁰ More specifically, Alexander Contee Hanson

²⁷ Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 200.

²⁸ Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 203.

²⁹ The quote is from the Deposition of George Steuart, *RCG*, 215. For the rumors against Harper and Oliver and the attacks against Smith's and Heath's houses, see Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 22-23; Deposition of David Geddes, *RCG*, 51; Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 120-21; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 149; and Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 161-66.

³⁰ Linda Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca:

was, in addition to being the editor of the *Federal Republican*, the president of the Baltimore chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society, an association founded in Boston that acted in Maryland as a front organization for the Federalist Party. The Society sponsored overtly partisan celebrations on George Washington's birthday, rendering any confusion in Baltimore over the political meaning of imagery associated with George Washington rather difficult to believe.³¹

Thanks to advance warning, Mayor Johnson averted a riot at Hutchins's house by arriving before the mob and taking possession of the door. The mayor dispersed the initial crowd of forty or fifty rioters by leading them away from the house. Upon his return, however, an even larger crowd numbering in the hundreds had assembled. In order to control the situation, the mayor allowed several members of the mob to search the house. Finding that Hutchins had already fled, the mob subsequently disbanded. Remnants of the Anglo-American mob tradition are evident from Johnson's interaction with the Old Town mob, yet "before this assemblage was completely dispersed, Mr. John Diffenderfer informed" the mayor that "a few gentleman, having heard of the riot, had armed themselves, and were probably on their way."³² Johnson quickly departed Old Town to intercept Samuel Hollingsworth and two other horsemen who were armed to the hilt. The mayor was able to convince them to return home, but the eagerness on the part of Baltimore's elite to confront a riot with force significantly departed from custom. According to William Gwynn, Mayor Johnson still clung to the traditional belief that

Cornell University Press, 1970), 4-8, 10.

³¹ Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812," 243.

³² Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 162. Also see Deposition of William Stewart, *RCG*, 61-62, and Deposition of George Steuart, *RCG*, 215.

“persuasion would be more effectual than force in dispersing mobs,” but others had already graduated to a more typically modern response.³³

By the morning of June 24, the mob began to direct its violence against the city’s African American population, forgoing even the mask of attacking Federalists to gain political legitimacy. James Briscoe, who was among the very few free African Americans who owned multiple properties in the city, became an easy target. Briscoe had allegedly made controversial comments of some nature, but what he actually said, if indeed he said anything at all, was unclear. Major John Abel believed that the mob was under the impression that Briscoe “made declarations in favour of the British, and had declared he would be a king himself.” Yet another witness believed that the mob was under the impression that Briscoe had declared “if all blacks were of his opinion, they would soon put down the whites.”³⁴ In the end, it did not really matter to the mob what Briscoe had said; the rumor alone provided the rioters with all the excuse they needed, and over the next few days, the mob engaged in a campaign of racial harassment against African Americans, both free and enslaved, beginning with Briscoe’s two houses.

Briscoe had informed Abel of the threat to his property the night before the attack, giving Judge John Scott an entire day to take care of any legal formalities associated with calling out the militia. However, the judge ordered Abel not to assemble his troops until a warrant could be produced for the drummer who actually made the threat against Briscoe’s house. This action conveniently delayed the militia from assembling until early evening, and by the time Abel’s troops arrived, it was too late to prevent the mob from

³³ Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 23.

³⁴ Deposition of John Abel, *RCG*, 307, and Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 149. Also see Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 160-63.

demolishing Briscoe's house. Not satisfied with destroying just one house, the mob then proceeded to demolish Briscoe's property next door where his daughter lived. Judge Scott's inability to produce a legal warrant before dusk may have been the result of poor timing, but it may have been a deliberate strategy to prevent the militia from assembling. Without Abel's interference, the mob's fury would be directed against Briscoe and the African American community, and subsequently, away from affluent Baltimoreans' homes.³⁵

Attacks against African Americans continued with threats to the African American church on Sharp Street, and assaults against a free African-American man named Remier, and an enslaved man held by Mr. R.W. Watts. While only four people were charged with a crime in the destruction of James Briscoe's house and in the beating of Remier, the beating of an enslaved man earned eight indictments from the Court of Oyer and Terminer and the immediate attention of the town leadership.³⁶ Mayor Johnson concluded that the "the treatment received by the blacks," or at least the property of slaveholders, "rendered it indispensable to adopt measures for their protection." The violence might not have ended if not for a change in the weather, "it raining excessively hard," and this, according to Mayor Johnson, allowed cooler heads to prevail.³⁷ A troop of horse under Colonel James Biays was subsequently called out the following day to parade the streets, and peace was finally restored.

³⁵ Deposition of John Abel, *RCG*, 307; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 149; and Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 120-21.

³⁶ For the threat to the African American church, see Deposition of John Hargrove, *RCG*, 179; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 149; and Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 185. For the indictments, see Gilje, "'Le Menu Peuple'," 59.

³⁷ Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 162-63.

Into July, many of Baltimore's affluent families remained nervous. Samuel Hollingsworth remarked that "many Gentlemen in the City think it expedient to keep their Houses well armed."³⁸ Hollingsworth's admission is revealing; the perceived threat was specific to the city's gentlemen without further reference to Federalists and Republicans. If party tensions had been the primary cause of the rioting that started after midnight on June 23, it would have been unlikely that Federalists and Republicans would have peacefully participated together during the July 4th observances, by which time the city was again at peace. One historical account of the riots suggested that almost every night after the Gay Street Riot, from late June until late July, the mob continued to roam Baltimore's streets, but there is no evidence either in the court records or in the depositions of witnesses to support this claim.³⁹ John Hargrove, a Republican and the City Registrar, commented that "the peace of the city was restored, and he dreaded the consequences" of another riot. Colonel James Biays, the Republican commander of the Fell's Point Dragoons, commented that the restoration of Hanson's newspaper "would produce another riot." From these comments it is clear that Wilson and Biays believed the mob to not have been a threat in early and mid-July.⁴⁰

Alexander Hanson remained unsatisfied with the outcome of the Gay Street riot. Contrary to the wishes of many Maryland Federalists, he intended to return to Baltimore under arms, and re-establish the offices of the *Federal Republican* in a house rented to Jacob Wagner at No. 45 Charles Street. A few hot-tempered Federalists, including John

³⁸ Thomas and Samuel Hollingsworth to Levi Hollingsworth, July 1, 1812, Hollingsworth Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁹ The claim is made in Gilje, "The Baltimore Riots of 1812," 551.

⁴⁰ Hargrove and Biays are quoted in Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 187-88.

Hanson Thomas, the Federalist leader in Frederick County, supported Hanson's scheme. One Federalist, Colonel John Lynn, went even further to recommend that Hanson recruit "a full quantity of gallant men to defend" the house on Charles Street, and that the men be armed with muskets, buckshot, bayonets, hatchets, and tomahawks. Lynn assured that he would himself "join those gallant spirits, going on that noble enterprise," but when the time came just a few days later, he did not go to Baltimore.⁴¹

Hanson recruited a dozen people to help defend the house, and John Howard Payne, a twenty-year old actor from New York City for whom Hanson was a benefactor, rode through the countryside to muster additional support. Generals "Light Horse" Harry Lee and James Lingan, both of whom were Revolutionary War heroes, also arrived in Baltimore to join Hanson on the night of July 26, 1812. On the morning of July 27, Hanson had the latest edition of his newspaper circulated throughout the city. Although the paper had been printed in Georgetown, it carried the address of the Charles Street house, and criticized the local government for its failure to prevent the June 22 demolition of the Gay Street office.⁴² Lee hoped that the house's armaments would only be needed in the most unlikely circumstances, but Hanson's brash decisions to antagonize the populous and let them know exactly where to find him suggests that he wanted a fight. During the morning and early afternoon, numerous Federalists from Baltimore joined Hanson, and by late afternoon, almost thirty armed men were prepared to defend

⁴¹ Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812," 244-46; John Hanson Thomas to Alexander Contee Hanson, July 15, 1812, in *Baltimore American*, August 8, 1812; and John Lynn to John Hanson Thomas, July 15, 1812, in *Baltimore American*, August 8, 1812.

⁴² *Federal Republican*, July 27, 1812.

No. 45 Charles Street from the mob.⁴³

A number of Baltimore officials had advance warning of Hanson's activities, and could have acted to preserve the peace before the mob's arrival. On the afternoon of the twenty-seventh, at least four people related concerns over the security of the Charles Street property either to Mayor Johnson or to the City Registrar, John Hargrove. The residents included Mrs. White, the owner of the Charles Street property that Jacob Wagner had rented and then turned over to Alexander Hanson, Mrs. White's son Peter White, Dennis Nowland, and Richard Heath, a Federalist and a Major in the Fifth Baltimore Regiment under the command of Joseph Sterrett. Hargrove expressed almost no concern about the situation on Charles Street when Nowland confronted him. He promised to "inform the Mayor . . . [as] soon as he had shut up the office and eat a bit of dinner." Hargrove finally informed Johnson of the report late that afternoon as the mayor was making preparations to take his sick child into the country. The mayor "doubted there would be an attack," and repeated the same line to Mrs. White, Peter White, and Richard Heath before leaving the city.⁴⁴ During the riots in late June, Johnson had been quick to react when property was threatened, and his actions earlier in the summer make his cavalier attitude on July 27 very troubling. He may have honestly believed that no attack would occur, but it seems highly unlikely that his political instincts would have been that far off.

The preparations on Charles Street began drawing a crowd in the late afternoon.

⁴³ Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812," 245-46; Overmyer, "The Baltimore Mobs and John Howard Payne," 54-57; and Deposition of John Howard Payne, *RCG*, 14-18.

⁴⁴ Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 69-71; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 164; Deposition of John Hargrove, *RCG*, 179-80; and Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 187-88.

The distribution of the *Federal Republican* that morning clearly attracted the first of those who showed up in the streets. Dennis Nowland observed “a number of boys, of various sizes, in number of twelve or fifteen . . . and a few men in the middle of the street encouraging the boys.” Violence ensued in the early evening when the boys began throwing rocks and bricks at the doors and windows of the house. Nowland approached the men “and begged of them to make the boys desist,” because the house belonged to a widow. One of the men replied “no, Hanson, the damn’d tory is our object, and we will have him.” Nowland pleaded that “this was not the way to get him,” but his words had little effect. Inside the house, Hanson was already prepared to throw caution to the wind and attack, but General Lee gave strict orders not to fire at the crowd. Instead, Ephraim Gaither, one of the defenders of the house, launched a stove plate out the second-floor window that hit Nowland, cutting off part of his left foot. Nowland later recounted that the injury “was so severe as to prevent me from walking, and I was carried home.”⁴⁵

As the mob steadily increased in size, the defenders of the Charles Street house decided to take action. In an attempt to scare off the mob, General Lee gave the order to those on the second floor of the house to fire over the heads of the crowd. Surprised by the gunfire, many members of the mob momentarily backed off, but it was at this point that the French druggist Thaddeus Gale decided to lead a rush the front door. Along with several other rioters, Gale made it to the entrance hallway as far as the staircase when the defenders of the house opened fire. Gale was killed, and two other rioters were badly injured.⁴⁶ After Gale’s death, several Justices of the Peace circulated through the crowd,

⁴⁵ Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 188.

⁴⁶ Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 26-27; Deposition of William Steuart, *RCG*, 64; and Deposition of Richard Magruder,

trying with little success to calm the situation. Entreaties were also made by several concerned citizens to General John Stricker, whose house at 15 South Charles Street was easily within earshot of the events down the block. Stricker was the commander of the Baltimore Brigade, but he refused to act unless two magistrates signed an order legally calling out the militia.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the violence continued to escalate.

Between nine and ten o'clock, the defenders of the house fired additional shots from a second-floor window in an attempt to scare off the mob and clear the streets. The shots were aimed over the rioters' heads; unfortunately, one of the blasts accidentally struck John Williams, a stonecutter who had been standing across the street as an idle spectator.⁴⁸ The deaths of Gale and Williams enraged the mob, and several defenders tried to escape their wrath by fleeing the house. Several of these hapless deserters were quickly apprehended and beaten. Although none of the escapees from the house were killed in these actions, many could have been if not for the timely intervention of family members who pleaded for their lives.⁴⁹

By midnight, after two deaths and many members of both the mob and those in the house were wounded, General Stricker finally received written authorization from

RCG, 75.

⁴⁷ Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 73; Deposition of Richard Magruder, *RCG*, 75-77, 83; Deposition of Dennis Magruder, *RCG*, 117; Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 121; and John Stricker Letterbook, MS.789, Maryland Historical Society.

⁴⁸ John Williams was identified as the slain spectator in the Deposition of William Stewart, *RCG*, 61. Williams's occupation is listed in *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812).

⁴⁹ John Stone saved Andrew Boyd from being beaten, Thomas Buchanan saved Rufus Bigelow from being beaten, Isaac Caustin saved Samuel Hoffman, from being hanged, and James Heath escaped cleanly. See Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 72; Deposition of John Stone, *RCG*, 98; Deposition of Thomas Buchanan, *RCG*, 102; Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 121; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150-51; and Deposition of Isaac Caustin, *RCG*, 317.

two magistrates to call out the militia. By this point, the mob had grown to over six-hundred, most of whom were engaged in rioting, and many of whom were “much intoxicated.”⁵⁰ The general chaos of the scene stood in marked contrast to the workmanlike demolition of the Gay Street office a month before. Stricker ordered out only one troop of cavalry, commanded by his nephew, Major William Barney. Barney approached the mob but failed to persuade them to desist. Unwilling to attack, the major placed his cavalry between the mob and the house and waited for the city officials to arrive.⁵¹

By three in the morning, Mayor Johnson had returned to the city, and together with General Stricker and Judge John Scott, organized the surrender of Hanson’s Federalists. At seven o’clock, the militia formed a hollow square in which the Charles Street defenders were protected from the mob while being conveyed to the Baltimore City Jail for their own protection. Despite an armed escort and the combined authority of Johnson, Stricker, and Scott, violence against the defenders was barely contained. As the procession continued to the Jail, Major Barney’s cavalry needed to constantly fend off rioters attempting to break the square, and one rioter, whom Barney recognized as an Irishman, even accosted the major directly. The city officials and their prisoners managed to reach the Jail without further casualties, and the crisis was momentarily abated.⁵²

⁵⁰ Deposition of James Hutton, *RCG*, 147; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 266; Deposition of Middleton Magruder, *RCG*, 305; and Deposition of John Abel, *RCG*, 308-10.

⁵¹ Deposition of David Geddes, *RCG*, 51; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 260; and Henry Lee, *A Correct Account of the Baltimore Mob* (Winchester, VA: John Heisel, 1814), 8-12.

⁵² Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 27; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150-51; Deposition of Henry Gaither, *RCG*, 192-97; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, *RCG*, 235-36; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 260-72; and Deposition of Richard Dorsey, *RCG*, 339-40.

On the afternoon of July 28, the mob reassembled at the Jail. The prisoners inside became increasingly apprehensive about their safety as the day progressed, despite the assurances of Mayor Johnson that they would be protected. Otho Sprigg decided to save himself by moving to a different cell and being lodged with common criminals. General Stricker gave orders for several hundred militia to muster, but by late afternoon, only twenty to thirty troops had convened.⁵³ With no cavalry blocking their way, and the prisoners inside being unarmed, the mob rushed the jail and forced the door.

The rioters at the Jail vastly outnumbered the prisoners, and Thompson and his cellmates stood little chance of escaping. From his hiding place inside the Jail, Otto Sprigg, who had fired the first shot at the Charles Street riot, could see General James Langan fall to his knees and beg for his life. The general had neither pulled the triggers on the guns that killed Williams and Gale, nor had he given the order to fire on the mob. None of that mattered. The mob held him and the other prisoners responsible for the deaths, and paid little attention to the general's desperate pleas for mercy. Sprigg could only watch as the mob viciously clubbed, kicked, and stabbed Langan in the chest until the old soldier slumped over.⁵⁴ David Geddes, a witness to Langan's murder, remembered John Mumma, a butcher, glowering over Langan's lifeless body and snarling "Look at the damn'd old tory General." Geddes could scarcely believe the words.

Langan was a hero of the Revolutionary War who survived imprisonment aboard one of

⁵³ Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; Narrative of John Thompson, *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812; Deposition of Joseph Sterrett, *RCG*, 124; and Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 168-70.

⁵⁴ Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812. Alexander Contee Hanson reported that Langan did not die immediately, but succumbed from stabbing wounds several hours later. See Alexander Contee Hanson, "An Exact and Authentic Narrative of the Events Which Took Place in Baltimore on the 27th and 28th of July Last," in *Interesting Papers Illustrative of the Recent Riots in Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1812), 38-39.

the notorious British prison barges in Wallabout Bay off Brooklyn. Geddes found the butcher's comments "shocking to the feelings of humanity." Yet there was Mumma, spitting the words at the old general who did not survive this brutal assault by the Baltimore mob.⁵⁵

Just a few feet away from Lingan, another rioter thrust General "Light Horse" Harry Lee against a wall and pummeled the general until he collapsed onto the ground. Lee was a renowned cavalry officer who, like Lingan, had served in the Revolution with distinction. Yet his reputation did not prevent the rioters from thrusting pen knives into his face, slashing and stabbing him until he went unconscious from the pain. The mob then dragged Lee's seemingly lifeless body outside the Jail and tossed him onto a bloody pile of dead and dying prisoners. Unlike Lingan, Lee survived the brutal actions of the mob, but he had been struck so many times in the face with such fury that he never fully recovered from his injuries.⁵⁶

Mayor Johnson hurried to the steps in a vain attempt to disperse the mob, but the rioters protested against his interference. One barked at the mayor, "you damn'd scoundrel don't we feed you, and is it not your duty to head and lead us on to take vengeance for the murders committed."⁵⁷ The contrast to the comments made during the Gay Street riot of June 22 are striking. From his statement, the rioter clearly knew who the mayor was, but displayed no respect for him or his duty to uphold the laws. Several

⁵⁵ Deposition of David Geddes in *RCG*, 53.

⁵⁶ Lee, *A Correct Account of the Baltimore Mob*; Narrative of John Thompson, *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812; Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; and Narrative of John Hall, *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812.

⁵⁷ Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 170.

gentlemen quickly pulled the mayor away from the scene to save his life.⁵⁸ Once inside the jail, the mob displayed the unbridled cruelty that led to stabbing death of General James Langan, and the vicious beating of General “Light Horse” Harry Lee.

Several prisoners made it outside, but they quickly ran into a throng of angry rioters in the streets. John Hall later wrote that he was seized by “two rough looking men” who “tore my shirt leaving my bosom bare.” Hall was beaten and tossed onto the bloody pile of victims from which he could see “several of my friends knocked down and their blood scattered all over the pavement.”⁵⁹ One of them was Thompson, who had been struck from behind and tumbled down the stairs of the Jail into the streets. He was seized by half-a-dozen rioters, beaten, and then dragged away to be tarred, feathered, and lashed. Thompson later reported that several rioters also wanted to gouge his eyes out and others wished to break his legs with an iron bar. The rioters ultimately decided to set him ablaze. Thompson was able to put out the flames by rolling himself on the ground. He was subsequently carried off by calmer heads to the Bull’s Head Tavern where he was encouraged to reveal the identities of all those people who had been in the house on Charles Street the day before. Not surprisingly, Thompson broke down and provided several names.⁶⁰

After some time, Dr. Richard Hall intervened, and pronounced that most of the prisoners were dead and that the others would soon die of their wounds. The latter claim was not true, but Hall hoped that this declaration would encourage the mob to disperse.

⁵⁸ Deposition of Lemuel Taylor, *RCG*, 44-46; Deposition of William Merryman, *RCG*, 112; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 170; and Deposition of Charles Robinson, *RCG*, 190.

⁵⁹ Narrative of John Hall, *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812.

⁶⁰ Narrative of John Thompson, *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812.

His words did not have the intended effect. For some time the rioters debated hanging or burning the bodies, or possibly throwing them all into the Jones Falls. Eventually the rioters decided to let Hall have the bodies for dissection. After the mob had gone, Hall and other doctors moved quickly to save the lives of those badly wounded.⁶¹

Even after the surviving Federalists had removed from the city, rioters continued to roam Baltimore's streets. On the pretense of searching for copies of the *Federal Gazette*, some rioters approached the post office. Although General Stricker proved reluctant to act against the mob when it seemed the primary target of their violence were Hanson and the Federalists, he moved decisively on July 29 to stop the violence from spreading any further. Stricker finally called out the entire Baltimore Brigade to protect the post office, and ordered a cavalry charge to disperse the mob. For the next several days, armed militia patrolled the city to insure no additional rioting occurred.⁶²

CONSEQUENCES AND MEANINGS

In the wake of the Baltimore riots, commentators around the republic condemned the barbarity of the mob. The death of General Langan in particular represented an especially appalling episode, and reactions to it were swift and scathing. In an address honoring Langan's death, George Washington Parke Custis of Arlington bemoaned the republic's loss of innocence, and as George Washington's grandson, he garnered a national audience. Custis lamented that in the wake of the riots, "even sanguinary France now cowers to our superior genius in iniquity." He further bemoaned that France "is no

⁶¹ Narrative of John Hall, *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812.

⁶² Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot," 258.

longer supreme in sin,” and “my soul sickens at the thought.” The *Boston Repertory* went even further to suggest that Baltimore “now contains within itself the fiery materials of its own destruction.” The riots foreshadowed a dismal future for the city, which, the *Repertory* predicted, “will continue to break out in eruptions of anarchy and crimes.”⁶³ The Baltimore riots in 1812 indeed marked the breakdown of the “Anglo-American mob tradition,” and signaled the beginning of a transition to the more bellicose and deadly rioting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Baltimore earned the nickname “mobtown,” a pejorative term that would trail the city for more than a generation. Yet contrary to the prognostication of the *Boston Repertory*, Baltimoreans would not be alone in experiencing this more virulent type of rioting—they were simply the first.⁶⁴

Federalists around the country decried what they claimed was the inevitable result of Republican radicalism, and used the incident to gain political advantage. Alexander Contee Hanson was elected to Congress from Montgomery County, and was later elected to the U.S. Senate from Maryland. More important, the October 1812 elections returned a Federalist majority to the Maryland House of Delegates which immediately launched an inquiry into the recent riots in Baltimore. The major focus of this highly politicized investigation by the Federalist-dominated House was to answer whether or not the city’s

⁶³ George Washington Parke Custis, “An address occasioned by the death of General Lingán, who was murdered by the mob at Baltimore: Delivered at Georgetown, September 1, 1812,” (Boston, 1812), and *Interesting Papers Illustrative of the Recent Riots at Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1812?), 25.

⁶⁴ Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 65-68. For the new, more violent form of rioting that replaced the Anglo-American mob tradition, see especially Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974); Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study in Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), and *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Thomas Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 60-116; and David Grimsted, *American Mobbing. 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

predominantly Republican leadership had acted responsibly during the riots to protect the city's Federalists. The questions were therefore directed more toward the actions of public officials and the rioters themselves than toward the underlying causes of the violence.

The most conspicuous example of the committee's political agenda was the twenty-fourth question. It specifically asked whether or not the deponent knew of any officials who were guilty of misconduct, and was used to solicit responses concerning the conduct of General William Stansbury, a Republican who arrived at the Jail just before the mob burst through the doors to attack the prisoners inside. General Stricker, not Stansbury, was the commander of the Baltimore Brigade, and Stansbury had no power to call out the militia. Thus the focus on Stansbury's conduct served little purpose other than to embarrass the city's Republicans by trying to connect Stansbury's actions or inactions to the mob's savagery. Several witnesses testified that Stansbury addressed the mob and had said "the persons in the house in Charles-Street, were all a set of rascals, and ought every man of them to have perished." Further, that "if he [Stansbury] had been present, he would have been the first man to have fired the gun [cannon] . . . in defiance of the civil authority."⁶⁵ Such language provided tacit approval for an attack against the Jail, but with one exception, none of the deponents indicated that the general's words had an effect on the rioters, one way or the other. The mob did not require the approval of a Republican general to proceed. Other witnesses defended Stansbury's conduct. John

⁶⁵ Deposition of John Worthington, *RCG*, 47. Worthington's rendition of Stansbury's conduct was supported in large part by Robert Long, Elias Green, John Dougherty, William Smith, and William Merryman. See Deposition of Robert Long, *RCG*, 89; Deposition of Elias Green and John Dougherty, *RCG*, 97; Deposition of William Smith, *RCG*, 100; and Deposition of William Merryman, *RCG*, 109-12. Two other witnesses disagreed with Worthington's testimony. See Deposition of Isaac Dickson, *RCG*, 87, and Deposition of John Schultz, *RCG*, 127-31.

Wooden and Abraham Hatten testified that far from inciting violence, Stansbury had entered the Jail to help defend General Lee.⁶⁶

The ostensibly political focus of the House investigation ignored any direct questioning of witnesses about the underlying causes of the riot. The committee believed that “private revenge sought its gratification under the imposing garb of zeal against reputed enemies of their country.” As the committee was only interested in ascertaining the causes of what it believed to be political intolerance, and whether or not the city’s officials took appropriate actions to maintain the peace, acts which seemingly “attempted to gratify . . . embittered passions” did not hold any interest for them.⁶⁷ Thus much of the disjointed, sporadic, and often irrational actions of the rioters were omitted in the official report.

The House Federalists were not alone in limiting the focus of the inquiry into the riots. Eager to shift blame onto Hanson and his Federalist comrades, Baltimore Republicans also dismissed lawlessness which seemingly had no direct connection to the publication of the *Federal Republican*. Although Edward Johnson, Baltimore’s Republican mayor, testified that “a number of inferior disturbances took place, confined to the Irish alone,” and that he feared repercussions against African Americans and shipping on the city’s docks, he maintained that “I have never believed that a spirit of insubordination to the civil authority existed” in Baltimore. In his mind, “the late unhappy disturbances in the city, are certainly to be traced to the violent and inflammatory publications in the *Federal Republican* news-paper, which produced a

⁶⁶ Deposition of John Wooden, *RCG*, 142-43, and Deposition of Abraham Hatten, *RCG*, 137.

⁶⁷ Introduction, *RCG*, 3.

general spirit of indignation.”⁶⁸ Despite the political focus by Federalist and Republican officials in the House investigation, many of the depositions by the committee’s witnesses did not overlook the “private” acts that contributed to much of the violence. Testimony concerning these actions reveals more about the reasons for the violence than either the members of the House committee or the mayor were willing or able to face.

Samuel Sterett, a leading Federalist and militia captain, was politically predisposed to blaming Republicans for the violence. Yet he remarked that rioters seemed to use the word “Tory” as a “cant term . . . which was the signal for insult and violence.” The varied “terror and consternation” that “many respectable persons” faced that night seemed to appear from multiple directions; the mob was a “many headed monster.”⁶⁹ What Sterret had noticed, and had trouble articulating clearly, was that the mob used the pretense of political action to mask social and economic causes for their violence; the riots on Gay Street in June and Charles Street in July provided the political cover for rioters to act on a multitude of grievances and disaffections.

Frustration over lagging economic opportunities, rather than anti-Federalism, helps explain why many rioters abandoned their attacks on supposedly Federalist targets after the Gay Street riot and began assaulting African Americans and their property. On June 23, affluent Baltimore residents fueled the idea of a possible uprising by African Americans. Mayor Johnson received “many reports . . . of threats and imprudent observations of the black population, by some of the most respectable inhabitants” of the city. Samuel Sterrett also testified that “in the midst of all this anarchy and confusion,

⁶⁸ Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 177.

⁶⁹ Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 203.

alarms were raised of a conspiracy among the negroes, hostile to the whites.”⁷⁰ At best, these fears arose from a legitimate concern that the almost continuous rioting of the past thirty-six hours would encourage a rebellion. At worst, wealthy Baltimoreans manipulated the racism of the mob to deflect attention away from themselves.

Once the specter of an uprising was raised, rioters quickly turned against African Americans. Rising prices and stagnant wages between 1802 and 1812 meant that times were hard for Baltimore’s working people, and much of the city’s white working poor, including the substantial population of Irish and German immigrants in Baltimore, were in competition against African Americans for employment. Many of the city’s manufacturers and artisans preferred hiring African-American laborers, both free and enslaved, over white wage earners, adding to the city’s racial divide. The relative segregation of the city’s immigrants to the most peripheral parts of the city also likely contributed to white wage earners’ sense of economic disadvantage. Unlike African Americans, who did not congregate into segregated neighborhoods until the 1820s, immigrants were already geographically isolated as early as 1812.⁷¹ As seen in Figure 9-1, Baltimore Town, the wealthiest area of the city, accounted for 51 percent of the city’s residences in 1812. Yet only 35 percent of the city’s immigrants lived in Baltimore

⁷⁰ Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 163. Also see Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 205.

⁷¹ Christopher Phillips, *Freedom’s Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 103-09; Joseph Garonzik, “The Racial and Ethnic Make-up of Baltimore Neighborhoods, 1850-1870,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 71 (1976): 392-402; and D. Randall Beirne, “The Impact of Black Labor on European Immigration into Baltimore’s Oldtown, 1790-1910,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 83 (1988): 331-45. The trend towards residential segregation of Free Blacks in Baltimore closely parallels trends in Philadelphia and New York City. See Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 165-68, and Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 172-76.

Figure 9-1

Population by Neighborhood, 1812

Area of the City	Number of Assessed Residencies	Percentage of Population
Baltimore Town	351	50.8%
Old Town	126	18.2%
Fells Point	90	13.0%
Federal Hill	28	4.0%
Western Precincts	97	14.0%
CITY TOTALS	692	100.0%

Sources: *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812), and Baltimore City Property Tax Records, 1812 (microfilm), Baltimore City Archives.

Notes: Of the 2,741 individuals listed in the 1812 tax records, the residencies of 692 were identified in the 1812 City Directory.

Town. Almost a third of lived in either Federal Hill or the western precincts, compared to just 14 percent of the city's overall population. The location of so many immigrants away from Baltimore Town isolated them from the most lucrative area of the city.⁷²

The composition of the rioters who targeted African Americans in June clearly shows that they came from the most marginal parts of the city—socially, economically, and geographically. Paul Gilje could not locate any of the sixteen rioters charged with assaulting Blacks could in Baltimore Town, few could be called mechanics, only three appeared in militia rolls, and just one, who was assessed at \$50, could be found in the tax records. All of those charged were either journeymen or laborers, unlike the rioters on Gay Street, or those who participated in any of the riots during the rest of the summer, where at least one artisan or shopkeeper was present.⁷³ For these workers, the merest hint of a conspiracy served as adequate reason for the rioting against African Americans on June 24.

The publication of the *Federal Republican* a month later certainly raised agitation within the city, but the reappearance of Hanson's newspaper was the chief motivation for only a very few people who participated in the subsequent riot on Charles Street. Early in the evening of July 27, Thomas Wilson, editor of the Republican newspaper *Sun*, stood outside the Charles Street house and urged the mob on to violence. Just a few hours before, Wilson's chief concern was that merchant Nathan Tyson planned to load a ship with flour for the British troops in Spain. The editor's agenda that evening was clearly

⁷² The average wealth of residents in Baltimore Town was \$511, in Old Town was \$332, in the western precincts was \$278, in Federal Hill was \$180, and on Fells Point was only \$150. 1812 Baltimore City Directory, and Baltimore Property Tax Records, 1812, RG.4 #1, microfilm reel 83, BCA.

⁷³ Gilje, "'Le Menu Peuple'," 59, 62-63.

political, as was that of Baptist Irvine, the editor of the rival Republican newspaper *The Whig*. These men probably desired nothing more than the destruction of the house and the physical humiliation of those inside, but they can not be considered leaders in this riot. The other members of the mob did not recognize who they were, and there is no evidence that the mob grew thanks to premeditated or orchestrated action by Republicans.⁷⁴

John Howard Payne, the twenty-year old New York actor that Hanson patronized, rode all over Old Town and Fells Point that night and discovered that “everything was tranquil.” Arriving back at Charles Street, he found the streets “in commotion.” Joel Vickers, who lived on the main street leading from Fells Point into Baltimore Town, “saw no unusual collection of people” moving from the Point towards Town, “and [he] was the whole night at home.” Levi Hollingsworth, a Federalist, believed that “the proceedings at Charles-street were, during the night, almost unknown at Fells Point,” and other witnesses reported that very few inhabitants from Fells Point were present in the streets.⁷⁵

Reasons other than the publication of the *Federal Republican* may have contributed to the mob’s swelling numbers on July 27. Before dusk, William Barney stopped by the home of Thomas Jenkins, which was next door to the Charles Street house occupied by Hanson’s Federalists. Barney spent “a few minutes” conversing with Jenkins when “a negro came out of the Wagner’s house with a pitcher in one hand, and a

⁷⁴ Deposition of Richard Heath, *RCG*, 58; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 188; and Deposition of John Stone, *RCG*, 98.

⁷⁵ Deposition of John Howard Payne, *RCG*, 16; Deposition of Joel Vickers, *RCG*, 41; and Deposition of Levi Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 333. Also see Deposition of Lemuel Taylor, *RCG*, 46.

[sword] cane in the other.” After surveying the assembling mob, the unidentified African-American man allegedly said, “there they stand by two’s, and by three’s, but damn them, let them come, we are ready for them.” The statement surprised Barney, who turned to Jenkins and said “do you hear what that damn’d negro says?” Barney then left without making any attempt to disperse the growing crowd.⁷⁶

The exchange between Thomas Jenkins and Major Barney suggests that race may have been more of a motivation in this riot than observers realized. As was the case in June with the attack against James Briscoe’s houses, the threat to the African American church, and the assaults against several other African Americans, even the rumor of the African-American man’s words in front of the house would have been enough to incite violence. If rumors of the exchange spread, many of the city’s white, disenfranchised, working poor would have been moved to action—just as the rumors of Briscoe’s speech had led to violence against his houses and other African Americans. There is ultimately no way to tell, because the House committee investigating the riots never asked the question. Yet the composition of the mob assembling outside 45 Charles Street lends some weight to the idea.

By midnight on July 27, between three and five thousand rioters were in the streets. As the depositions by Payne, Vickers, and Hollingsworth demonstrated, the mob did not come across Jones Falls from Fells Point or Old Town, nor did they come from Baltimore Town. This means that the rioters must have arrived from either the western precincts or Federal Hill where a large percentage of Baltimore’s poor immigrants resided—a possibility that is reinforced by the testimony of witnesses to the riot and the

⁷⁶ Deposition of Thomas Jenkins, *RCG*, 169.

identities of those rioters appearing in the court dockets. Unlike the descriptions of the mob at the Gay Street Riot on June 22, witnesses to the Charles Street Riot testified that the mob consisted primarily of immigrants, especially Germans and what one witness called “low” Irish.⁷⁷ Whether immigrant or American-born, however, a significant percentage of the mob was white, poor, and disenfranchised. Of the twenty-eight rioters listed in the dockets of the Court of Oyer and Terminer for rioting on Charles Street, only six appeared in the militia rolls, none were assessed at more than \$100 in the tax records, and only two had residencies in Baltimore Town. Most of the rioters were tinmen, plasterers, and carters—members of the working class often in direct competition with African Americans for jobs.⁷⁸

The rioters’ struggles to fire a cannon on the evening of July 27 further underscores the evidence from the tax records, militia rolls, and city directories as to the Charles Street mob’s composition. A few rioters led by a carter named Jones had left the scene and returned with a cannon. Nobody in the mob seemed to know how to fire the weapon, nevertheless, John Gill, a tailor, climbed on top of the gun to prevent anyone from trying. Another man named Long put his finger over the touch hole and said “no person should prime it or fire it, unless he was stronger than himself.” That none of the rioters knew how to fire the cannon suggests that few members of Baltimore’s militia companies were present, and reinforces the idea that most of the rioters were poor, disenfranchised wage earners who likely possessed little interest in the political

⁷⁷ Deposition of Lemeul Taylor, *RCG*, 46; Deposition of Thomas Kell, *RCG*, 138; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 177; and Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 264.

⁷⁸ Gilje, “‘Le Menu Peuple’,” 54-56. Gilje identified George Benner as one of the rioters, but Peter White testified that he encountered “a man who is in the employ of George Benner.” See Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 71. It thus seems unlikely that Benner himself was at the riot.

predispositions of Hanson and the other Federalists within the house. By contrast, the tailor John Gill fit the profile of a politically-aware rioter in the Anglo-American mob tradition, but in the Charles Street riot, Gill joined those who sought to contain or stop the violence.⁷⁹

Although race may have been a motivating factor in the riot, other rioters appear to have been motivated by a more general sense of economic disaffection. After General Stricker ordered out the militia to contain the violence, he further recommended to Major Barney that the troops remove their regalia. Stricker knew that several rioters had already harassed at least one genteelly dressed spectator, and Stricker feared that they might attack Barney's troops if they wore anything which might identify them as affluent. If anti-Federalism or racism alone animated the mob, such a suggestion would never have been made. Barney's troops were entirely white, and Barney himself was a Republican running for city office. Stricker's recommendation clearly demonstrates that the General recognized an economic motivation in the Charles Street riot. Barney complied, removing his white feather and Society of the Cincinnati emblem, and had his Hussars remove their white feathers too.⁸⁰

The evidence from the House investigation demonstrates the highly conflicted nature of the Baltimore riots and the multiple causes for the rioters' actions. Anger at Hanson and his Federalist opposition to the war angered a number of rioters, but racial and ethnic tensions and economic disillusionment provided motivations for other members of the mob. The only consistent trend among the various rioters was a universal

⁷⁹ Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150-51.

⁸⁰ Deposition of John Howard, *RCG*, 233.

lack of respect for the city's officials and their attempts to reestablish order through traditional eighteenth-century methods of crowd control. No matter what their particular grievance, rioters no longer possessed a strong sense of deference for traditional authority. Without this, officials proved nearly powerless to stop the activities of the mob even when the militia was called out. Deferential bonds relied on a traditional social structure, and in the city, this required a stable household economy. The rise of the manufacturers had undermined that economy, and the actions of the Baltimore rioters demonstrates that by 1812, the traditional deferential social order had also finally collapsed.

Despite the breakdown of the Anglo-American mob tradition, the market revolution had not fully entered the consciousness of Americans. Unlike rioters in the Jacksonian period, the Baltimore rioters displayed an extensive range of motivations. Violence against African Americans occurred, but none of the mob actions in 1812 could be called a race riot. Although many rioters attacked symbols of wealth and affluence, none of them made specific demands about poor relief, employment, or better wages. Although violence between Irish factions and political opponents occurred, the Baltimore rioters did not exhibit the polarization of a Jacksonian-era election riot. Although much of the violence was due to the material condition of the rioters, none of rioters actually made that explicit connection.

The polyvocality of the Baltimore rioters in 1812 demonstrates that the working people of the city had not yet developed into a coherent working class with a clear sense of class consciousness. Boundaries between race and class, and coerced labor and wage earning remained fluid, obfuscating any consistent working class politics in the early

decades of the nineteenth century. The riots thus show that the transition from a traditional eighteenth-century social structure to the archetypical social divisions of a capitalist society were not yet complete. Although the long-term reconstruction of American society was well underway, the market revolution had not yet been made fully part of Americans' consciousness.

EPILOGUE

FREDERICK DOUGLASS'S BALTIMORE

At first, everything seemed to be going well. William Gardner, one of the master shipwrights at Fells Point, has a contract to build two men-of-war for the Mexican government. The ships had to be delivered on time, so the yard was busy and confusing, especially for young Frederick Douglass. Nineteen and newly apprenticed as a caulker, Douglass was "called a dozen ways in the space of a single minute" by carpenters rushing to get planks sawed, timber moved, or pitch heated. There was plenty of work to be done, leaving little time for the workers to focus on anything other than the tasks at hand—or so Douglass thought. He remembered that at first, white and black carpenters worked side-by-side, and that "all hands seemed to be well satisfied" with the arrangement. Then, "all at once, the white carpenters knocked off, and said they would not work with free colored carpenters." Their reason was "that if the colored carpenters were encouraged, they would soon take the trade into their own hands, and poor white men would be thrown out of employment." The protest did not end there. Taking their lead from the white carpenters, some of the white caulkers began harassing the black caulkers. Douglass was singled out. Having recently been savagely beaten by a plantation overseer, he was unwilling to be treated in a degraded manner. When he resisted, four white caulkers went after him "armed with sticks, stones, and heavy handspikes." One hit Douglass in the head with a brick and viciously kicked him in the face when he fell to the ground. The white carpenters soon descended on the scene, many crying out "kill the damned nigger! Kill him! Kill him!" Douglass realized that his life would certainly be lost if he did not take flight at that moment. He knew that "to

strike a white man is death by Lynch law,—and that was the law of Mr. Gardner's shipyard." Indeed, this was the law throughout the city.¹

The protest at Gardner's shipyard and the attack on Douglass revealed a much sharper division between African Americans and whites in Baltimore than had previously existed. A perceptible shift in race relations had occurred since the riots of 1812. In the heat of that long summer, both those who engaged in violence and those who sought to contain it had great difficulty articulating why the riots happened and against whom the violence was primarily intended. Although African Americans were attacked, they were not specifically and consistently targeted. Although most of the rioters were poor, having suffered a decade of stagnating wages and rising prices, there were also many middling artisans among those involved. Although many rioters used the pretense of political action to mask social and economic frustrations, others were genuinely interested in tarring and feathering Federalists. Race, class, and politics were all motivations for violence in the summer of 1812, and the lines between these motivations were blurred. At Gardner's shipyard, things were different. The white carpenters consciously identified their grievances as economic, linked those concerns directly to racial division, and made no attempt to cloak their reasons as political. The white caulkers believed their interests

¹ Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself," in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Signet, 1987), 311-13. The term "Lynch law" refers to an extra-legal summary judgement against someone that leads to violence. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, the origins of the term are in dispute. The most likely origin dates from 1782, when the Virginia Assembly indemnified Charles Lynch, a Justice of the Peace, for having allegedly fined and imprisoned suspected loyalists in 1780 without proper authority. It is also possible that the term is derived from "Lynche's Creek," a meeting place for South Carolina Regulators in the late 1760s. During the nineteenth century, the term increasingly came to be identified with racial violence, usually white-against-black. See "lynch law," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University Press, 2002 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/0013...2878&p=1&d=1&sp=1&qt=1&ct=0&ad=1>> (March 7, 2002).

were identical to those of the white carpenters, thus consolidating all white workers at the yard against the yard's black workers regardless of their status. And this time, African Americans were clearly the targets of violence.

The racial and class divisions apparent to Frederick Douglass on the Baltimore docks in 1836 had been present in 1825 when he first arrived in the city. Not the Douglass took much note of them at the time. As an eight-year-old child recently removed from the brutality of a plantation and newly installed as a house servant in the city, Douglass was understandably more concerned about getting along with the other people in the house than in taking careful note of social and economic relationships in Baltimore. From his youthful vantage, it appeared that "a city slave [was] almost a freeman compared with a slave on a plantation." It seemed that city slaves enjoyed "a vestige of decency" compared to life in the fields.² Indeed, this may have been a fair way to compare enslaved life in Baltimore and Talbot County, Maryland during the 1820s. Term slavery and delayed manumission had already transformed Baltimore's African American community at that point. The free black population had already eclipsed the enslaved population, and the city was quickly approaching the point at which African Americans who were *born* free would outnumber those who had been emancipated. Yet the success of the city's African Americans in achieving freedom from bondage was tempered by the upswing in racial animosity that resulted from the market revolution. As the riots of 1812 demonstrated, the turn from an Atlantic-oriented economy to one focused on developing the domestic economy and advancing market connections into the backcountry had contributed substantially to increasing degree of racial and class division in the city. In the decade after the riots, those divisions calcified, producing the

Baltimore that Frederick Douglass witnessed first as a child and then as a young man running to save his life. In Frederick Douglass's Baltimore, the boundaries between race and class and coerced and wage labor were no longer fluid. Instead, a cohesive white working class with a matured sense of racism had emerged, and African Americans were geographically segregated and economically marginalized. The market revolution had fully crept into the American consciousness, and the long-term social and economic reconstruction of American society from the colonial through the postcolonial to the early national was finally complete.

² Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," 275.

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VITA

Richard Smith Chew

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 14, 1969. Graduated from the Episcopal Academy, June 1987. Received B.A. with honors in history from Bucknell University, May 1991. Received M.A. in history from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, December 1992. Received a Research Fellowship from the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies for the 1994-1995 academic year. Received the Glucksman Teaching Fellowship from the College of William and Mary for the 1999-2000 academic year, and was one of the first Writing Preceptors in the History Writing Resources Center at the College of William and Mary. Has taught American history, western civilization, European history, and World history as an adjunct professor at the College of William and Mary, Norfolk State University, and Thomas Nelson Community College. Currently teaches at Bucknell University as a Visiting Assistant Professor of American history.